

THE PROMISES AND PITFALLS OF MODERNITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF  
YOUNG CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MEDIA PRACTICES FOR CLAIMING  
CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP IN URBAN INDIA

A Dissertation

by

MARISSA JOANNA DOSHI

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Chair of Committee,  
Co-Chair of Committee,  
Committee Members,

Head of Department,

Antonio La Pastina  
Cara Wallis  
Srividya Ramasubramanian  
Dongxiao Liu  
J. Kevin Barge

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnography of the media practices of young Catholic women in Mumbai, India. Media practices are conceptualized as cultural practices via which the participants in this study claimed cultural citizenship in order to challenge discourses that yoke national identity with Hindu culture and construct Catholicism as “foreign” and Catholic women as morally bankrupt and hypersexual. Media practices examined included practices related to photography, privacy, and safety using mobile phones and the consumption of television programs and movies. Through these practices, participants attempted to displace the link between Indianness and Hindu culture and show that Catholic culture can also reflect Indianness, when Indianness is defined in terms of being modern Indian woman because the discourse of modern Indian womanhood aligns with how middle-class Catholic culture is practiced in India. Indian modernity emphasizes cosmopolitanism and consumption (similar to Western modernity) but is also marked by an ongoing emphasis on valuing community building, particularly in the context of family. It is also gendered in that modern Indian women are expected to practice sexual sobriety. Through photography practices, participants showcased the various dimensions of Indian modernity. By using the mobile phone to ensure safety and privacy, participants navigated the gendered and classed dimensions of Indian modernity. Finally, media consumption patterns revealed how participants learned about and enacted Indian modernity. Thus, by expressing Indian modernity through their media practices, Catholic women claimed cultural citizenship.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Bella Doshi (1944-2010),  
mother and best friend

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*It is a humid, hot evening in 2004 when I meet my friend, Le-Ann, at a coffee shop. The shop, located along Mumbai's rocky coastline, is bustling with young professionals, university students, and a sprinkling of families. We settle into comfortable chairs on the patio, hoping that the evening sea breeze will cool us down. A server comes up to take our order. "Two cappuccinos please," we say nonchalantly as we check our Nokia mobile phones for texts. Cappuccinos, coffee shops, and even mobile phones are relatively new occurrences in Mumbai, but we've adapted remarkably quickly to them. We are adept at ensuring that our meager weekly allowances allow us to buy at least one over-priced coffee from these shops each week and cover the cost of a pre-paid phone card<sup>1</sup>. Meeting at coffee shops, texting, and talking on our mobile phones have become integral to our friendship. These are the spaces and technologies that we use to gossip about our Saturday night shenanigans, grumble about overly strict parents, and set up clandestine dates. Today's meeting is another gossip session. I'm especially excited because this is when my friend tells me how her meeting with Mrs. Hemdev went. Lea-Ann hopes that Mrs. Hemdev will one day soon be her mother-in-law.*

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<sup>1</sup> According to a 2010 Nielsen survey, "Mobile Youth around the World," 97% of Indian youth preferred pre-paid phone plans. Pre-paid phone plans involve buying a fixed amount of talk-time minutes for a fixed amount of money and is preferred by youth because they are typically on tight budgets and prepaid options allow them to monitor phone usage as well as recharge talk-time relatively easily as needed.

*I excitedly ask, “Well, go on. What happened? How did it go?” Le-Ann responds, “Umm..I don’t know. I spoke with Raj about his mom after she left. You won’t believe what she told him...” “Uh-oh..what did she say?,” I ask. “Well, she said I was okay for right now. But not to get carried away. That Catholic girls don’t have any culture. I’m good for a test-drive but not the final race. She told him that for marriage, he should find a ‘real’ Indian with values. Whatever. I have more culture than she knows. My family has lived here for years. What does she mean “no culture,” “test-drive”? I can’t believe she gets away with basically calling me a slut.” I console my friend, without knowing exactly how to comfort her. After a while, we abandon the conversation about Le-Ann’s love life and move on to debate the love life of the characters of our favorite TV show, Friends.*

*The next day, when we go shopping for shoes, Le-Ann laughs at my choice of shoes saying, “Gosh Mariss! Those are so dhin-chack (flashy). So Bollywood! I guess it’s okay though. You have Indian features. They wouldn’t work for me.” I roll my eyes and think, “I might have Indian features but I’m still cool.” After all, as proof, there’s my “Georgia-cut:” the hairstyle of my favorite character from Ally McBeal, painstakingly executed by my long-suffering hair stylist.*

Le-Ann’s sexual intimacy with her Hindu boyfriend is used by the boy’s mother to code her as un-Indian and hence without culture (in Mrs. Hemdev’s opinion, at least). Further, Mrs. Hemdev’s callous characterization of Le-Ann also points toward the simmering religious tensions among different religious groups in Indian society. While in this encounter, Le-Ann’s response is to assert her Indianness by claiming that her



family has been living in India since generations, her conflicted relationship with Indianness is seen in her use of the word “Indian” as a pejorative term when critiquing my fashion sense. My response to reclaim the marker of “fashionable” by emphasizing the similarities between my style and that of a Western TV character points to how foreign media contribute to understandings of modernity in urban India and how “the West” and “India” are engaged in a tense relationship.

Le-Ann’s rejection of Bollywood<sup>2</sup> and our mutual affinity for Western TV programs can be understood as rejection of a local media culture that provides inadequate and flawed representations of non-Hindu communities. Although Indian TV focuses on Hindu culture wherein Indian-Christians are all but invisible, Bollywood exoticizes Christians by painting them as constantly outside of Indian culture. In these media, not only do Christian women denote the “West” but they are also routinely depicted as vamps or molls who are sexually available, usually in contrast to the Hindu central female character who is virginal and moral.

Although the incident described above occurred in 2004, the tensions it highlights have remained important in 10 years that have followed. This claim finds support in the continuing interest of media scholars trying to understand how national identities are being reworked in the context of globalization and the role of local politics in these reworkings. This claim also finds support in my personal experiences and informal observations of young Catholic women in India, initially as a part of the

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<sup>2</sup> “Bollywood” is a contested term among academics and lay audiences. However, I use it because it continues to be one of the most widely used terms for contemporary Hindi movies and was the term that participants used when discussing Hindi movies.

community while growing up in Mumbai, and since 2008, as a partial-insider who has traveled back annually to Mumbai for extended holidays.

Even today, religious minority communities continue to negotiate tense, complicated relationships with national identities in modern India where Indianness is increasingly linked to Hinduism. In addition to local politics of religion, since 1991, globalization has become an important force in shaping the Indian national identity. Moreover, globalization has meant a translation of Indian traditions rather than the erasure of traditions, pointing to the limits of cultural imperialism theories. However, fears of cultural imperialism, or in this context, Westernization, persist and have cultivated right-wing nativism. Thus, in postcolonial India, the global, local, and national are interconnected.

In this dissertation, I use ethnographic methods to examine these connections. Specifically, I focus on the media practices of young, middle-class Catholic women in Mumbai to better understand how global and national identities relate to local politics of gender, religion, and class. Given that the Indian media landscape has been dramatically altered ever since economic liberalization policies in the 1990s ushered in global media and communication technologies, media practices are a productive site for studying how the “global” is experienced. The media practices I analyze in this dissertation are the consumption of TV programs and movies and the use of mobile phones.

The discussion above provides a rationale for this project but a few specific questions still need to be answered. Why study Indian-Catholics? Because a popular, if flawed and simplistic narrative, positions Catholics as sell-outs and lacking in national

loyalty and thus outside of Indianness because of their practice of a colonial religion. Thus, focusing on this community allows me to examine how an understudied aspect of local politics, namely, how affiliation with a minority religion, shapes the experience of belonging to nation. I've chosen to focus on women because discourses of nationalism position women as bearers of tradition and any reworking of traditions such as those occurring as a result of globalization brings local politics of gender to the forefront. Finally, I limit my study to middle-class urban women because it is this subset of the population that has the financial capital and opportunity to fully engage with rich, complex, expensive mediascapes<sup>3</sup> of globalization. In the section that follows, I review theories relevant to understanding the media practices of young, Catholic women in urban India.

### **Theoretical frameworks: claiming culture through media practices**

Theories of intersectionality, hybridity, and cultural citizenship inform this study. In addition, I draw on audience reception literature and the social shaping of technology framework to understand media consumption and technology practices,<sup>4</sup> respectively.

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<sup>3</sup> I borrow this term from Arjun Appadurai (1996), who defines mediascapes as “the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media (p. 35).

<sup>4</sup> The theoretical framework used in this dissertation draws on the framework developed by Cara Wallis (2008) in her dissertation, *Technomobility in the margins: Mobile phones and young rural women in Beijing*. Wallis uses intersectionality, hybridity, and social shaping of technology to understand how the technology practices of Chinese migrant workers are embedded within social relations. In this dissertation, I use this theoretical framework in another cultural context, namely, to study the technology practices of young Catholic women in urban India. Wallis was concerned with understanding the experiences of alienation her participants faced on migrating

### *Intersectionality*

Categories such as race, class, caste, religion, gender, and sexuality mark our identities, and borders of local and global significance such as nationality, region, Third World, etc. further complicate our identities and experiences. By focusing on the experiences of marginalization that result from living at the intersections of multiple categories of oppression, feminists attempt to make visible the gendered power relations constituting these borders. A useful framework for engaging with marginalization tied to multiple identity categories is Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality, originally developed to highlight the experiences of African-American women in the United States.

An intersectional approach begins by acknowledging that the different facets of our identity operate simultaneously rather than in isolation, and that these different facets of our identity are constitutive of each other. Rather than thinking of identity categories in terms of hierarchies, we have to acknowledge that these categories overlap or intersect with one another. Further, an intersectional approach argues that it is not enough to examine how gender alone informs an experience because the experience is simultaneously mediated through other identity categories. Therefore, in order to understand "identity," one must examine these points of intersection of various identities by focusing on how various discourses constitute these intersections, and thus, shape lived experience.

Although Crenshaw (1991) was primarily concerned with the oppression of marginalized groups in the United States, intersectionality is also useful for

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to the city; I'm interested in understanding the experiences of alienation of women of minority religions.

understanding how marginalization works in other cultures (Ogilvie & Lynch, 2002; Verloo, 2006; Vakulenko, 2007). The usefulness of intersectionality for this dissertation comes from the way in which it places gender in direct conversation with other aspects of women's identities. Thus, it allows for an understanding of how different aspects of an individual or group's identity place them in the path of different forms of exclusion, such that exclusion rooted in categories of religion, gender, class, or sexuality operate simultaneously rather than as a hierarchy.

Although feminists have examined how the categories of race, class, and gender operate simultaneously, more recently there has been some attention paid to the impact of other identity categories. These include categories such as citizenship (e.g.: Yuval-Davis, 2007; Rottmann & Ferree, 2008; Christensen, 2009) and caste (e.g.: Brewer, Conrad & King, 2002; Haq, 2013). Further, Ong (2006) notes that when organizing on a global scale, feminists should note the impact of religion on the lives of women and understand how this identity shapes their feminist politics and claims. Thus, using intersectionality as a theoretical framework requires a deep understanding of cultural context if one is to go beyond examining concepts that are important in Western contexts when studying non-Western cultures. In India, issues of religion and caste are typically more in focus and more problematic than race. Therefore, one of the goals of this dissertation is to understand how belonging to religious minority community shapes the lived experience of women. In this way, this dissertation adopts a transnational feminist perspective because it acknowledges that the usual categories used in the United States might not be useful or transferable in the context of other countries.

Here, I've chosen to focus on how claiming a religious identity informs young women's experiences of belonging to nation. An attention to contextualization also underscores that although this dissertation looks at how Catholics who are a religious minority in India can be excluded from claiming a national identity (in cultural terms), this argument does not apply to Western contexts or contexts where Christian denominations are typically the dominant cultural group. Rather, a more useful connection between the analysis presented in this dissertation and the role of religion in Western contexts can be made when trying to understand the experiences of young, Muslim women in the West. For example, similar to the analysis presented in Chapter III wherein I analyze how young Indian-Catholic women use photography practices to showcase their modernity and thus claim the identity of "modern Indian," projects such as "Somewhere in America #Mipsterz" can be understood as attempts by young Muslim women to demonstrate a modern identity<sup>5</sup>.

By focusing on an often undiscussed group in studies of Indian culture and highlighting how women contest exclusion through their media engagement, this dissertation answers Mohanty's (1998) call to feminists to move away from presenting Third-World women as a homogenous, helpless group. Shohat (2001) is also engaged in a similar endeavor. She indicts Western feminists for using "Third World" as a catch-all term for women from areas other than what's considered the West and by limiting the definition to a Eurocentric East/West geography, erasing diversity from the lives of these

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<sup>5</sup> "Somewhere in America" is a short video by Brooklyn-based Habib Yazdi and Abbas Rattani, who attempt to showcase young, veiled American-Muslim women as fun-loving, go-getters through images of veiled women skateboarding in heels, climbing trees, etc. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3Nq0NzRrFE>)]

women and making invisible the different ways in which oppression works in their lives. I attempt to answer these calls for a more heterogeneous understanding of the experiences of Third-World women by highlighting how in the context of increasing saffronization (the linking Indian identity of with Hindu religion) in India (Demerath, 2004), claiming non-Hindu religious affiliations puts women in the path of microaggressions<sup>6</sup> that question their claims to a national identity. For example, a number of participants reported instances where non-Catholic peers assumed that my participants drank alcohol and smoked because they came from a religious culture that was accepting of these behaviors, which are typically not considered appropriate for “respectable” Indian women.

A common critique of studies that use intersectionality is that the focus of these studies remains on the categories of difference; that is, by retaining a focus on categories of difference, there seems to be an attempt to achieve a complete description of the subject. Butler points out the shortcoming of this “laundry list” approach when discussing the impact of identity categories as follows:

Theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of colour, sexuality, ethnicity, class and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed ‘etc.’ at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from such exasperated ‘etc.’ that so often occurs at the end of such lines? (Butler, 1990; p. 143)

For Butler, the intersectional approach is limiting because it does not question how categories can themselves be exclusionary. However, I agree with Knapp’s (1999)

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<sup>6</sup> Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (p. xvi).

response to this critique that Butler's critique assumes a US-centric discourse of identity politics<sup>7</sup> in which "theoretical and political definitions of 'group identities' as 'difference' go hand in hand with a renewed exclusion of the non-identical" (p. 130). Further, as Lorey (2008) points out, intersectionality is not about categories—it is about *oppression* rooted in categories. To recover this political thrust of intersectionality, therefore, it is important to remember that intersectionality is not a tool for understanding gender, race, or religious affiliation as neutral categories, but that it is a framework to understand the intersections of sexism, racism, and religious fundamentalism.

However, Butler's (1990) critique remains valid in that identity categories also mean decisions about who belongs to those categories, and by extension, who is allowed to speak out about oppression. Therefore, McCall (2005) suggests that rather than focusing on the different categories, researchers need to shift their attention to how the categories themselves are constituted. In this "intra-categorical approach," qualitative methods are used to explore "the intersections of some single dimensions of multiple categories in selected social positions" (p. 1781). Ludvig (2006), for example, uses narrative methods to show how "although research that links gender to other categories of difference decenters gender, it does not center any other category. Instead, the intersections of gender with other categories of difference serve to constitute the specific quality of the gender identity in question in a specific time and place" (p. 255).

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<sup>7</sup> Here, I am not arguing against the US-centric discourse of identity politics. Rather, I want to point out that while such identity politics has been useful and necessary in the American context for achieving policies such as affirmative action (Fraser, 1995), they might not be productive discourse in other non-American contexts.



An attention to time and place, or context, is also emphasized by Nira Yuval-Davis (2011), who considers it a part of the inter-categorical approach to using intersectionality. Further, Yuval-Davis points out that to exploit the political potential of intersectional, it is important to use the inter-categorical and intra-categorical approaches rather than choose between one or the other. That is, she advocates for “an intersectionality approach which combines the sensitivity and dynamism of the intra-categorical approach with the more macro socio-economic perspective of the inter-categorical approach” (p. 6). Finally, in response to Butler’s (1990) argument that intersectionality approaches devolve into efforts to achieve complete description of a subject, Yuval-Davis (2011) rightly points out that complete description is not the goal of intersectionality; identity categories are deployed only in as much as those categories are relevant to discuss the complexity of the oppression being explored. That is, for an intersectionality theorist, “the recognition of the social power axes, not of social identities – is of vital political importance” (p. 9).

In this dissertation, an attention to context is crucial for understanding the marginalizing experiences of young, Indian-Catholic women and is what makes their gender and religious affiliation political identities rather than simple social group identities.

Marginalization takes on different forms, and the experience of marginalization of a poor peasant woman is qualitatively different from that experienced by the young Catholic women who participated in this study. This study in no way tries to place the various experiences of marginalization along a hierarchy or continuum. Rather, my focus

is on a specific type of marginalization, cultural marginalization, and my only agenda in this regard is to point out that cultural marginalization occurs and that it is an experience that negatively impacts the quality of life of my participants. However, to state that any experience that limits an individual's choices is marginalizing is problematic because it can be twisted to reinforce a discriminatory status quo. Instead, it is more helpful to conceptualize marginalization as an experience that involves systemic discrimination wherein communities or individuals are denied rights and/or opportunities that are available to others in the population. In this context, young Catholic women are culturally marginalized because they are denied the respect afforded to Hindu women when they (Catholic women) are seen as hypersexual and not "true Indians" because of their religious affiliation. Their gender further deepens this experience of marginalization because it is used as a reason to deny them access to opportunities and resources available to their male peers.

The discourses of Hindu fundamentalism that are currently in circulation in India and contribute to the cultural marginalization experienced by participants in this study have not arisen in a vacuum; rather, they are a response to anxieties about cultural homogenization that accompany globalization. Similarly, they are also rooted in nativist discourses about who are the "original" inhabitants of India. These contextual factors cannot be ignored when discussing the sexism and fundamentalism experienced by young Catholic women in Mumbai. Mumbai is an experiment in creating a global, Indian city. As "India's financial capital," Mumbai remains an attractive consumer market for the foreign companies that entered the Indian markets after the economic

liberalization of 1991. Mumbai is also home to Bollywood, or Hindi cinema, one of the most prolific branches of Indian cinema. Bollywood, in particular, has been touted as a part of India's "soft power," with the government seeing it as an iconic and viable Indian cultural export that makes a convincing argument for India's relevance in global markets (Thussu, 2008).

However, the city is not a site where globalization is unabashedly welcomed and celebrated. Mumbai is also a hotbed of religious tensions, both historically and in contemporary times. Religious fundamentalism has marked the city in the wake of globalization. In particular, the Hindi-Muslim riots of 1992-1993 and terrorist attacks of 2011 have made the experience of globalization a violent one for many Mumbaikars. In the context of the Catholic community in Mumbai, issues of religious tolerance and rights often clash with modernization. Just before my fieldwork commenced, for example, a local Catholic organization called "Save our Land" was formed to protest the use of Church-owned properties for road-widening projects by Mumbai's municipal corporation (Figures 1 and 2). The Catholic community had also previously protested the demolition of crosses, established decades earlier and sometimes located in historically protected sites, for beautification or road widening. In addition, for the Catholic community, associations with Western culture have also proved to be particularly problematic in the context of Mumbai's political culture that is dominated by the Shiv Sena party<sup>8</sup>, which celebrates an anti-foreign rhetoric that often leads to violence<sup>9</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup> Palshikar (2004) traces the evolution of the Shiv Sena from a political party that advocated for workers' rights to its current avatar of a political party that encourages nativist politics.

the anxieties evoked by rapid globalization have led to the development of a fundamentalist form of nationalism that yokes Hindu religion to national identity, presenting Catholic citizens with a very specific conundrum: how to claim Indianness when the religion they practice is linked with colonial powers?

The intra-categorical approach mentioned earlier is also useful when discussing the experience of (not)belonging for Indian-Catholic women. Ludvig's (2006) understanding of intersectionality is important in this regard. For Ludvig, intersectionality is a useful framework because it allows researchers to both affirm categories and to simultaneously point out the fluidity of these categories.

Following Ludvig (2006), in this dissertation, I question the formulation of the identity of "Indian woman" in modern India. The anxieties of globalization are often borne by women who are seen as keepers of tradition. Urban Indian women are expected to walk the fine line between modernity and tradition without veering too much to either side. However, Catholic women in urban India are typically seen as more Western than Indian in terms of their dress, language, and other cultural markers and therefore are seen as embodying inappropriate modern Indian womanhood. Thus, this dissertation is concerned with showing how gendered discourses of religion and nationalism work to exclude Catholic women from claiming the identity of "Indian woman" and how Catholic women contest this exclusion through their media engagement.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that although I've presented this discussion of intersectionality as a theoretical framework, not everyone agrees with

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<sup>9</sup> Ghosh (2012) has reported on the Shiv Sena's attacks on couples celebrating Valentine's Day and harassment of women attending pubs.

labeling it as such. Davis (2008) points out that intersectionality has been used in feminist studies as a theory, a sensitizing concept, and an analytic tool, stating “It is not at all clear whether intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, to theorizing identity, or whether it should be taken as a property of social structures and cultural discourses” (p. 68). However, she also points out that it is this very openness and flexibility that this idea provides that allows for it to remain relevant and provides opportunities for researchers to expand and use it to build arguments, as I do by using it as a theory to understand a marginalized identity.

### *Hybridity*

The potential of hybridity theories to explain how our identities are being made or negotiated in an increasingly interconnected global environment (Darling-Wolf, 2008) is what makes them useful for understanding how globalization is experienced by those who are kept at the margins of national culture. This dissertation aims to better understand the interconnections between globalization, national identity, and local politics. Hybridity explains how identities are reworked at the interface of the global and local, and thus, it useful to understand how Catholic women, who are negotiating the impact of global process through national and local politics, experience globalization.

To think of identities as hybrid is to also acknowledge that identities are fluid rather than already determined conditions. It is this fluidity of identities that Bhabha (1994) emphasizes when conceptualizing hybridity. To explain hybridity, Bhabha adopts the metaphor of “third space”—a space of constant (re)working of identity and culture. This concept of “third space” moves us away from thinking in terms of binaries such as

East-West, national-foreign, global-local, etc. and instead focuses our attention on the margins or interstices of these binaries. For Bhabha (1994), identity and culture are produced and performed in these interstitial spaces. Accepting this conceptualization of identity means acknowledging that identity is a process rather than a static concept. Bhabha (1994) elaborates on the processual, evolving nature of identity formation by stating, “these ‘in between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular and communal—that initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act for defining the idea of society itself” (p.2). This statement illustrates another important point of Bhabha’s argument regarding hybridity: In the face of unequal power relations, non-dominant cultures and identities are not subsumed into the dominant; rather, the outcome of unequal power relations is hybridity. Bhabha’s (1994) contributions to the understanding of postcolonial identities rests in his arguments that rather than our histories (over)determining our cultural identity, our identities are also being made in the present. Thus, hybrid identities urge us to move beyond understanding identity categories as constituted only by history.

In postcolonial India, identities continue to be shaped by colonial pasts but also by postcolonial forces such as globalization and its attendant discourses of consumerism and modernity<sup>10</sup>. In urban India, in particular, the mixing of the global and local is obvious in spaces such as shopping districts, where flashy new malls share the street

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<sup>10</sup> I do not mean to suggest that consumerism and modernity are inherently postcolonial in nature. Instead, these are discourses that continue to prevail in postcolonial contexts and like in colonial times, they are used to justify exploitation and exclusion. The ways in which these discourses maintain their hold, however, is different in that they are not primarily enforced by external forces but are internalized as ideals and aspirations and enforced by both internal and external stakeholders.

with hawkers who sell knock-offs of the items sold in the malls. Movie posters of Hollywood and Bollywood movies jostle for space among the various billboards crowding the skyline, and voices speaking in a mix of Hinglish cut through the smog. By presenting urban India as a site of hybridity, I am not arguing that it is the only site where the local and global mix. In fact, in rural areas, this mixing of the global and local is often violent. The many rural communities that have been displaced as a result of modernizing initiatives such as dam-building projects (Walker, 2008; Nilsen, 2010) or the exploitation of local knowledge by global intellectual property laws (Shiva, 1997; Shiva, 2001) are evidence that the mixing of the global and local does not create stable or safe spaces for many. Even in urban spaces such as Mumbai, the juxtaposition of the city's international airport with numerous slums (that line the roads leading up to the airport) provides symbolic and material evidence that modernization and urbanization are elitist projects and that not all Indian citizens are afforded the same rights in practice, despite the law stating otherwise.

Thus, Bhabha's third space, while possibly celebratory because it is a space where dominant discourses that try to fix meaning are subverted, can also be an uneasy space. It is this experience of instability that has led writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) for example, to liken the living out of liminal identities to living in borderlands—places of volatility, places of both celebration and turmoil. Critical hybridity theorists (e.g.: Papastergiadis, 2005; Kraidy, 2005; Kaup, 2009) emphasize the unevenness in the experiences of hybridity by pointing out the unequal power relations within which hybrid identities exist. For example, Kraidy (2005) theorizes “hybridity [as] a space

where intercultural and international communication practices are continuously negotiated in interactions of differential power” (p. 317). Karidy also draws on Foucault’s (1972) conceptualization of discourse to point out that hybridity exists as a discursive practice. Thus, media, which form an important part of any cultural context, are implicated in processes of maintaining and producing hybridity. Various studies that use the concept of critical hybridity have analyzed how different groups navigate the media environment in the face of unequal power relations (Kraidy, 2005; Ishak, 2011; Guzmán and Valdivia, 2004).

Hybridity is also implicated in media representations of the middle-class female identity in India wherein Indian women are portrayed as having an (un)easy relationship between tradition and modernity (Steeves, 2008; Parameswaran, 2005). These representations raise the question of whether hybridity is a gendered experience (Darling-Wolf, 2008; Guzmán and Valdivia, 2004), which is a question that this dissertation explores by examining how Indian-Catholic women negotiate this experience of hybridity through media interactions along multiple axes of gender, religion, and class. By examining media interactions of this cultural group, this dissertation is founded on the assumption that “sexism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism are an integral part of our social fabric wherever in the world we might be...and these ideologies in conjunction with the regressive politics of ethnic nationalism and capitalist consumerism are differentially constitutive of all of our lives” (Mohanty 2003, p. 3). It is this differential constitution of hybrid identity that this dissertation highlights by focusing on media practices of women belonging to minority



religions. Thus, in the proposed dissertation, hybridity is conceptualized as a “communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements” (Kraidy, 2005; p. 317).

In a nutshell, identities of Indian-Catholic women are caught between tensions of tradition and modernity, old and new, East and West; this dissertation asserts that rather than transcending these tensions, Catholic women in urban India live out these contradictions through hybridity.

### *Cultural citizenship*

One of the tensions accompanying a hybrid identity is negotiating a sense of belonging to multiple spaces. Discussions about belonging, particularly with regard to countries, usually involve the terms of citizenship. Political citizenship—the right to vote, the right to hold governing positions, and other forms of democratic engagement have typically been studied in terms of rights. However, the influx of immigrants from the “Third-World” into “First World” countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have raised issues about rights to belong that are tied to issues beyond political citizenship rights. Immigrants, who bring with them cultures that might be different from the mainstream, evoke anxieties about the possible disruption of an imagined, homogenous national identity. For example, in the United States, debates over whether English should be made the official language (Crawford, 2000) have had policy implications in a number of states such as Alabama, Colorado, and Virginia (Piatt, 1990). In France and the United Kingdom, issues of religious freedom have come into conflict with issues of national identity (Werbner, 2007). In India, debates about Hindi

and English as official languages<sup>11</sup> continue and point to the enduring tensions between multiculturalism and nationalism. While immigration is an important dimension of cultural citizenship in First World countries, in India, the nation's colonial history plays an important role in discussions of national identity. Cultural citizenship is relevant to this dissertation because Christianity is generally viewed as un-Indian because of its ties to colonialism, and this framing places Christians in India outside of national culture.

Scholars have explored the anxieties and tensions posed by a multicultural citizenry to a homogenous national identity through the lens of cultural citizenship. As a theoretical concept, cultural citizenship recognizes that despite being “citizens” in the political sense, minority groups might be excluded from claiming national identities because of cultural differences from majority groups. Yue (2011) argues for the importance of considering culture when conceptualizing citizenship by pointing out that, “cultural understandings of citizenship [that] are concerned not only with “formal” processes, such as who is entitled to vote and the maintenance of an active civil society, but crucially with those whose cultural practices are disrespected, marginalized, stereotyped and rendered invisible” (p. 254).

Scholars have long emphasized the role of media in nation-building, communicating and cementing ideas about shared culture and values, and in the process, creating “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983). Popular media are also a space

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<sup>11</sup> A recent example of the language wars in India is a letter sent by Jayalalitha, Chief Minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, to Indian's Prime Minister Narendra Modi about his policy regarding the use of Hindi as the preferred language on official government social media accounts (“Ensure English,” 2014). Citizens of India's southern states continue to oppose the use of Hindi as the only official language because it is still not spoken by the large swathes of the population in these states.

where dialogues of belonging circulate through interpretation and production (Hermes. 2005). Given that minority groups have often been marginalized by big media through practices such as stereotyping and an absence of representation (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002; Ramasubramanian, 2005, 2011), the media play an important role in setting the terms for cultural belonging. Toby Miller (1998) takes this role of media one step further by pointing out that popular media not only decide *who belongs* but also tells the public *how to belong* by providing scripts for practicing citizenship. According to Miller (1998), the media teaches the public to a particular kind of citizen by emphasizing consumption. That is, citizenship is reduced to consumption. This strand of cultural citizenship scholarship is concerned with delineating how citizenship is practiced and emphasizes the role of class (in terms of consumer power) in expressing belonging. In this way, this strand of scholarship explains that those of low socioeconomic status are often excluded from claiming citizenship.

Another strand of cultural citizenship scholarship explores how communities or cultural groups are excluded from claiming national belonging, and rather than emphasizing economic aspects of exclusion (although they are usually related), this branch of scholarship looks at how minority communities' contributions in shaping national history and contemporary national culture are ignored or not celebrated. These scholars argue for the inclusion of minority cultures by advocating for minority rights and thus link cultural concerns with democratic engagement (Kymlicka, 1995). Renato Rosaldo (1994), for example, focuses on how minority cultures such as Latinos are marginalized by American curricula that ignores their histories, languages, etc. His work

argues that such cultural exclusions ultimately impact political citizenship by enhancing negative discourses surrounding the immigration of Latin@s. In this way, Rosaldo shows how the cultural and political dimensions of citizenship are intertwined. Such work has been key in gaining minority rights (Kymlicka, 1995). However, the discourse of “rights fails to address the problem of other minorities and disadvantaged groups and various other sub groups (the disabled, women) within an ethnic minority.” (Delanty, 2002, p. 63).

Another strand of scholarship now seeks to explore *cultures of citizenship* in order to deepen our understanding about the *cultural practices* through which citizenship is constituted (Stevenson, 2001). This shift in focus accepts that those who have political citizenship but are still excluded from claiming national identities negotiate citizenship through cultural practices rather than solely through practices of democratic engagement. This strand of scholarship seeks to put the formulation of cultural citizenship afforded to minority groups in conversation with how these formulations are negotiated by these groups through their cultural practices.

Although most of the literature on cultural citizenship focuses on how governments and national culture industries such as the media can and should provide more inclusive opportunities for cultural citizenship, in this dissertation, I want to extend this conversation by exploring how those who are excluded leverage the limited formulations of cultural citizenship they are afforded. Thus, my focus is on the cultural practices of those belonging to marginalized communities and not only on how these marginal cultures are excluded. I argue for understanding cultural practices as

citizenship practices, and in this dissertation, my focus is on a subset of cultural practices, namely, media practices.

To conceptualize cultural practices as enactments of citizenship is to understand citizenship as a process “of self-making and being made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes” (Ong, 1999). Even while we expand our understanding of how the rights and obligations of citizenship are claimed and practiced, it is important to remember that these practices operate within constraints—they involve “negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory” (Ong, 1999, p. 738).

Cultural citizenship in India is formulated in limited terms. Leela Fernandes (2004) explains that globalization has made modernity an important aspect of claiming Indianness. However, Indian modernity does not merely mimic Western modernity. As my analysis will show, Indian modernity emphasizes cosmopolitanism (such as speaking English) and consumption (similar to Western modernity) but is also marked by an ongoing emphasis on valuing “traditions” such as community building, particularly in the context of family. However, it is also gendered in that modern Indian women are expected to practice sexual sobriety, which is framed as upholding traditional Indian values. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that this formulation of Indian modernity aligns with how middle-class Catholic culture is practiced in India and it is this aspect of Indianness that Catholic women emphasize through their media practices.

Although national belonging is linked with Hinduism, particularly in Indian mass media, Catholic women emphasize the similarities between Catholic culture and Indian modernity through their media practices and call into question the exclusive linking of national culture with middle-class Hindu culture. In this way, through media practices that emphasize Indian modernity, Catholic women are able to negotiate the terms of exclusion from national culture.

Specifically, I argue that young Catholic women negotiate their sense of belonging to nation through their consumption of popular media and use of communication technologies that link discourses of gendered Indian modernity with Indian-Catholic culture. In Chapter III, I discuss how Catholic women use mobile phone photography practices to showcase Indian modernity, which is defined in terms of consumption, mobility, and an understanding of global aesthetics. However, defining cultural citizenship in terms of Indian modernity does not mean an escape from sexism and fundamentalism, and the media engagements of Catholic women reflect this understanding. I tackle this aspect in Chapter IV where I show how the mobile phone is used to ensure safety and maintain privacy, both of which are put at risk when embodying gendered Indian modernity. In chapter V, I discuss media consumption patterns to explain how Indian modernity is learned from media and facilitated by affiliation with Catholic culture.

As Stevenson (2001) explains, theories of cultural citizenship discuss belonging in terms of exclusion or inclusion in a community. My contribution to the scholarship is to link media culture and specifically media practices to the practice of cultural

citizenship. Stevenson (2001), Turner (2010), and Miller (1998) provide us with interesting frameworks about what cultural citizenship should look like and achieve and the role of institutions, political and cultural, in formulating citizenship. This dissertation tries to move away from understanding cultural citizenship as an abstraction to understanding cultural citizenship as a lived experience. This move necessitates an empirical grounding, which ethnographic methods provide. Finally, given the established role of media industries in defining cultural citizenship, I am interested in how audiences, particularly, marginalized audiences, respond to this exclusion through their engagement with exclusionary media cultures.

I also want to clarify that I do not mean to suggest that the culture of citizenship that Catholic women negotiate for themselves through their media practices is optimal. As I discuss in the conclusion, this practice of citizenship has costs—material and emotional—that make it inaccessible for some and a tenuous practice for those that engage with it. For example, using consumption practices to claim citizenship marginalizes those who lack economic capital. Therefore, although this form of cultural citizenship is far from ideal or adequate, it does explain why consumption continues to maintain its allure in modern societies. Cultural citizenship, thus, while clearly valuable, can be complicit in maintaining the very exclusionary discourses it tries to push against, and therefore, the terms of cultural citizenship need to be examined carefully.

This focus on the culture of citizenship enacted by Catholic women in urban India also requires that I acknowledge an assumption undergirding this project, namely, that my participants claim Indianness but also view themselves as being on the margins

of national culture. Affirmation for this assumption came from my participant's responses to questions about their sense of belonging that were asked during interviews. Most responded by saying that they saw themselves as Indians but also realized that their everyday practices differed from that of the majority of Indians. Further, they framed this difference as problematic. Importantly, their responses revealed that discourses of nationalism are gendered and linked to religious identity. Moreover, as this dissertation shows, these discourses are negotiated through media practices.

### **Theorizing media practices**

Audience engagement has been central concern of media scholars. From theorizing the term "audience" (Ang, 1996; Livingstone, 2004) to moving from the passive, effects-focused approach of the Frankfurt school to the more active, meaning-making approach advocated by the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, scholars have tried to understand how people interact with the media and how these interactions shape everyday life. Both the Frankfurt and Birmingham schools emphasized the role of power in shaping the relationship between audience and media, although the two schools conceptualized power differently. The Frankfurt school was mainly concerned with how media influenced audiences as evidenced in the work of theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer, who discussed mass media as a culture industry interested in perpetuating market interests. In contrast, the Birmingham school, starting with Stuart Hall's elaboration of the encoding/decoding model, focused on how audience responses to media are not predetermined but context bound. These ideas led to theorizing how marginalized audiences resist hegemonic cultural media messages



In this dissertation, I focus on media practices, which I conceptualize as the interaction of my participants with various media and technologies: television, cinema, mobile phones, and social media are all part of the media environment of my participants. The need to study interactions across various platforms is theoretically grounded in the understanding that in today's society, media platforms do not function discretely. As content circulates across various platforms, people are also actively engaged in making connections among media. Henry Jenkins (2006) terms this phenomenon “‘convergence culture’: where old media and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (p. 2).

The emergence of Web 2.0 is implicated in driving convergence culture, primarily because content creation and circulation are no longer only under the control of media companies and institutions. Today, “web-based media have made multidirectional, audience-generated communication a reality, giving citizens the opportunity to join the producers rather than merely consumers (Gross, 2009, p. 67). If in the past, the term “audience” was used as a stand-in for the term consumer or spectator, today, this classification no longer applies because the lines between consumption and production are increasingly blurred as audiences interact in new ways and in new spaces with media content. Consequently, Bruns (2008) and Jenkins (2006) advocate using the term “produser” instead of “audience” to reflect this blurring of the roles of media producers and consumers. Central to the idea of produsers is the idea that audiences are actively interacting with media, although the concept of active audiences

predates this understanding. Scholars who study audience reception were among the first to shift the understanding of audiences from homogenous masses to active, meaning-making individuals (Hall, 1974; Morley, 1980) or interpretive communities (Radway, 1991). These scholars emphasized that audiences are not cultural dupes, passively internalizing hegemonic discourse; instead, buying in or buying out of dominant ideologies occurs via a process of active negotiation (Hall, 1974; Radway, 1991; Liebes and Katz, 1990). An important aspect of conceptualizing audiences as active is viewing them as cultural beings who can make meaning through media, even if this capacity is not boundless: Even if dominant ideologies resist change, audiences find ways of developing alternative ideologies through interpretation and ritual (i.e., by making culture).

The study of active audiences pushed scholars into focusing on communities that did not interact with texts at the denotative level but instead sought out or created alternative readings of texts (Fiske and Dawson, 1996; Bobo, 1995). Of significance to this dissertation are studies showing how interpretations are often gendered. One such example is Kurien's (1999) study of how Indian women in diasporas use stories from the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana to emphasize the importance of male responsibilities. In Indian diasporic families, women usually play the role of cultural ambassadors, with mothers, in particular, being expected to nurture Indianness in their children. However, nurturing Indianness can become problematic for these women who play contradictory roles in the host country—the empowered professional and the selfless homemaker. In this context, Kurien (1999) found that the women decode the patriarchal images in

Indian media in ways that were more in their favor and retell these stories to children in ways that emphasize the importance of male responsibilities rather than female submissiveness.

Meenakshi Gigi Durham's (2004) study of media consumption by adolescent Indian girls provides some insight into how ethnic identity intersects with gender and generation to color media readings by second-generation members. Durham's participants pointed out that diasporic media (media produced by members of the diaspora) can help build a sense of community among individuals in diasporas. The girls she interviewed identified most closely with diasporic texts because they felt that these texts portrayed their cultural struggles more accurately than monocultural texts. Further, these texts were perceived as hopeful because viewing them with families led to conversations with parents about taboo topics such as sex, "love" marriages, and romantic relationships with a non-Indian.

Studies such as those by La Pastina (2004), who explored gendered readings of a Brazilian telenovela by rural women living within a patriarchal, isolated culture and Parameswaran (2011), who explored how the discourse of colorism permeates poor urban women's responses to advertisements for skin-lightening products, point to the importance of paying attention to local politics when discussing gendered readings. These studies illustrate Shome's (2006) point regarding the contributions of transnational feminism to communication studies, specifically in the area of audience research. Shome points out that transnational media scholars "recognize how contemporary conditions of mobilities and immobilities, cultural flows and stasis,

produce new hybrid spaces (and practices) of consumption that productively throw into crisis any notion of the audience as being a culturally stable and predictable object” (p. 264).

Further, the literature on fan audiences showcases the myriad innovative and creative ways in which audiences interact with texts—fan fiction, filking, activism, and crowd-sourcing (e.g.: Lewis, 1992; Jenkins, 2006; Gray, Sandovoss, & Harrington, 2007) are only some of the ways in which fan audiences actively interact with media. Similarly crowd-sourcing projects such as Wikipedia point to the potential of audiences to become knowledge producers. However, as Bird (2011) points out, produsage occurs even in offline contexts. Citing examples from her fieldwork in India (where Bollywood has begun to influence wedding rituals) and studies about the needlework practices of Jane Austen fans (Thompson, 2008), Bird (2011) argues for paying attention to practices occurring offline that are tied to media content.

Since this dissertation discusses media practices occurring across various platforms, there is an underlying acceptance of the idea that technological innovation has shaped media practices by affording new forms of expression and interaction. In the context of this “new media” environment, some groups of women have found that the Internet provides them with a space to voice their interpretations of media texts and challenge marginalizing discourses. For example, Gajjala (2002) discusses her online interactions with the members of a South Asian women’s group called SAWnet that functioned as a community and a safe space for South Asian women but closed ranks against Gajjala when they perceived her as an “outsider” attempting to fix the

representation of their community through her academic writings. McKinley and Jensen (2003) present a critical analysis of the politics of participation in their study of Amazonian women's participation in determining the content of a feminist radio program that allowed these "to use alternative media to voice their traditionally ignored reproductive health priorities, goals, and practices" (p. 180). In the realm of communication technology, we see that access to technologies such as Grameen phones have afforded economic stability to women in Uganda and Bangladesh (McAnany, 2012).

Although this dissertation acknowledges that technologies afford new forms and spaces for expression of culture, it does not advocate technological determinism. Technological determinism is evident in theories such as diffusion of innovations, where the introduction of technology is understood as the driving force for social change and modernization (Rogers, 1995). This approach is limited because it fails to take into account various contextual (social, economic, and political) factors involved in the adoption of technologies and how they are incorporated in social settings (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1999). The limitations of technological determinism are evident in the many failed social change initiatives that focused on introducing technologies such as e-readers or mobile phones into social settings. A recent example is a project by Worldreader, wherein Kindle readers were introduced into five sub-Saharan schools. However, because the children often traveled great distances in rough conditions and often had the e-readers with them while they performed various chores, there was a high rate of breakage. Broken Kindles were difficult to repair in these areas and consequently,

the introduction of Kindles did not necessarily accelerate learning among the children; instead, it led to an increase in e-waste (“Broken Kindle,” 2012).

Similarly, scholars who studied the role of media in the Arab Spring uprising caution against cyberutopianism. Morozov (2012) and Downing (2008) point out that the emphasis placed by journalists on the liberatory potential of new media harkens back to Cold War discussions of the modernization potential of media that were steeped in technological determinism. Downing (2008) recommends viewing the relationship between new media and political mobilization as “unprecedented” rather than “extraordinary” as a way of circumventing “technological fetishization.” Such a re-framing allows one to focus on the dynamic nature of political engagement engendered by new media. In the case of the Iranian uprising, when the United States asked Twitter to suspend maintenance so as to not disrupt the political mobilization happening in Iran via Twitter, Iranian authorities who had until then viewed new media’s potential in economic terms (and hence as an asset) now began viewing them as a threat and a way for American authorities to interfere in domestic politics. This kind of intervention was reminiscent of previous American involvement in Iranian politics and caused the Iranian authorities to crack down on Twitter users—even Iranians who were not in Iran were put in danger (Morozov, 2012). Thus, we see that the discourse of new media as vehicles of liberation has material consequences whose effect varies among spaces and subjects.

An attempt to move away from technological determinism was made by scholars who tried to move away from studying the effects of technology to how social forces and contexts influence not only influence the development but also the uptake of

technologies. This approach to studying the socially situated nature of technologies is known as the social shaping of technology (SST) (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1999). Similar to Everett Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovations theory, social shaping of technology is also concerned with how technologies are incorporated in a society. However, "SST emphasizes the importance of human choices and action in technological change, rather than seeing technology as politically and ethically neutral, an independent force with its own inevitable logic and motives, or as a mysterious black box that cannot be analyzed socially" (Lievrouw, 2006, p. 248). Thus, rather than seeing technologies existing in a vacuum, the SST approach advocates a social constructionist perspective which emphasizes that technological innovation is shaped by social and historical forces and that when technologies are introduced into society the ways in which they are incorporated are not always predetermined.

Fisher (1992) explains that "People are neither 'impacted' by an external force, nor are the unconscious pawns of a cultural 'Geist.' Instead of being manipulated, they manipulate. We assume that users have purposes they mean the technology to serve, and ...that users can understand and tell us about those ends and means (p. 17). However, MacKay and Gillespie (1992) point out that certain technologies are more open than others in terms of the ways in which they can be used. That is, "the appropriation of a technology cannot be entirely separated from its design and development (MacKay and Gillespie 1992, p. 699). Moreover, in addition to focusing on the ways in which a technology is used, it is also important to note the meaning of technology for users. For example, Wallis (2011) points out that Chinese migrant workers use their mobile phones

for pleasure and to maintain social networks, but these phones are also a “metonym for modernity.” Thus, for Wallis’ participants, the mobile phone had both functional and symbolic value. This focus on how meaning is created around technology involves a discussion of the ideologies circulating in a society and opens up discussions about how the processes surrounding technology—innovation, introduction, incorporation, interpretation—operate within power relations that structure society.

### **Research objective**

This dissertation explores the complicated relationship between religion, gender, and nationality by focusing on how young, urban Indian-Catholic women negotiate these various identities through their media practices and thus practice cultural citizenship. The impact of globalization, the history of colonization, and the complexities of local politics shape the media practices of these young women, who perceive themselves to be culturally marginal citizens by virtue of their religion and gender.

How are media practices used to claim cultural citizenship? What does it mean to have political rights but to be kept on the margins of national culture? How does this positioning shape media practices? In the context of globalization and simultaneous increasing saffron nationalism, how is cultural citizenship understood? What is the role of gender, class, and religion in the constitution of such citizenship? These are the questions this dissertation seeks to answer. In this dissertation, practices associated with media and communication technologies are viewed as sites where the relationships between the global, local, and national are reworked. Specifically, the analysis seeks to how these connections between the global, local, and national matter for culturally



marginalized citizens and how associated media practices reflect these concerns and provide avenues for subverting constraints imposed by authority figures (political, religious, and familial)? In a nutshell, this dissertation seeks to understand how media practices contribute to the practice of cultural citizenship.

### **Structure of the dissertation**

Chapter I: In this chapter, I introduce the major themes discussed in this dissertation and the theoretical frameworks that ground the analysis. I also state the goals of this project and point out that while my overarching concern is with elaborating the concept of cultural citizenship by focusing on media practices as a way of claiming such citizenship, media practices need to be understood in terms of how they reflect global, local, and national identities. Therefore, I am also interested in better understanding the links between these identities.

Chapter II: Here, I contextualize the project by discussing how the project was conducted and providing some background information regarding Catholics in Mumbai. In addition, I provide a brief overview of the media landscape in India. When discussing methodology, I focus on the processes and politics of conducting ethnography as a “native ethnographer” and explain why ultimately, I find the term problematic. Relevant appendices provided at the end of the dissertation include the interview guide and a table listing the participants and locations and date of interviews. When contextualizing the Catholic community, I focus on the role of conversion and colonialism in constituting the contemporary culture and the geographic distribution of Catholic communities in

Mumbai. Finally, in order to orient readers to the current media landscape, I provide a brief overview of the TV and movie industries and the telecommunications sector.

Chapter III: In this chapter, I analyze the mobile phone photography practices of my participants. First, I discuss the relevance of mobile phones to youth culture, and then I move on to discussing Indian modernity given that the analysis that follows shows that the photographs and practices of my participants were concerned with showcasing their understanding of Indian modernity. I also discuss the potential of this identity of “modern Indian woman” for allowing Catholic women to claim a sense of belonging to contemporary India. Thus, in this chapter, I begin to link Indian modernity with cultural citizenship.

Chapter IV: In this chapter, I continue to explore the role of media practices in claiming cultural citizenship when it is understood in terms of becoming a “modern Indian woman.” While the previous chapter used mobile phone photography to understand how young Catholic women conceptualize Indian modernity, in this chapter, I highlight the difficulties involved in achieving the cultural ideal of “modern Indian woman.” The use of the mobile phone to ensure safety and manage privacy reveals the gendered nature of Indian modernity and highlights the specific way in which gender and religion shape the experience of cultural citizenship.

Chapter V: Here, I turn my attention to the media consumption practices of Catholic women. Their media consumption patterns and practices reveal the role of media in shaping the conceptualization of Indian modernity discussed in Ch. III. By analyzing the mix of Hindi and English media consumption by my participants, I argue

for understanding Catholic women as cultural hybrids. Thus, the focus on media consumption reveals another facet of cultural citizenship: hybridity. Media consumption practices also reveal the ways in which cultural hybridity requires access to cultural capital and that by expressing modernity in terms of cultural hybridity, Catholic women reinscribe class hierarchies.

Chapter VI. In the conclusion section, I summarize my findings and the contributions of this dissertation. I also point out the limitations of enacting Indian modernity through media practices in order to gain cultural citizenship.

## CHAPTER II

### CONDUCTING AND CONTEXTUALIZING THE PROJECT

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I discuss how the project was conducted using ethnographic methods of participant observation and in-depth interviews. Next, I present a brief overview of the Catholic community in Mumbai. Finally, I describe the current Indian media and telecommunications landscape.

#### **Methodology**

This project explores the following: (1) how media and other social narratives intersect to constrain the identities of young Catholic women in Mumbai, and (2) how these young women engage with media in order to challenge dominant narratives, or constitute identities in ways that resist simplistic, one-dimensional conceptualizations of their lives and community.

Ethnographic methods are used to examine the ways in which young, urban, middle-class Indian-Catholic women engage with media in their daily lives.

“Engagement” in this context refers to how these women analyze, interpret, internalize, and negotiate media texts and technologies in their lives. That is, media practices across various contexts, ranging from personal to public, and across various platforms are the focus of this ethnography.

The fieldwork for this dissertation was carried out over a period of 4 months (mid-May-mid-August 2013 and mid-December 2013-mid-January 2014). The participants in this study are young, Catholic women living in Mumbai, India, aged

between 18 and 25 years. All lived with their parents and other siblings, and were either students or had recently entered the workforce. In terms of religious practice, they occupied a broad spectrum of religiosity, ranging from deeply committed to their faith to non-practicing Catholics.

### *Rationale for ethnography*

Although ethnographic methods have been used to study media engagement by many researchers, most of these studies focus on a single platform or a single text. However, this research project departs from this trend by attempting to study media engagement across multiple platforms and texts. One of the reasons for this decision is that in the current media environment of convergence, discrete platforms are no longer the norm. Rather, digitization has resulted in content that circulates across multiple platforms. TV shows and movies continue to be popular, but today, discussions about these media can occur on social media sites not just in living rooms, and these media can be viewed on laptops or mobile phones in addition to television sets. Consequently, media engagement with a specific text now occurs across multiple platforms.

Moreover, these new platforms have amped up interactivity by increasing opportunities and spaces for participation and making participation more visible. Thus, new media have not displaced traditional media but resulted in a culture of convergence—a media environment in which content circulates across platforms thanks to cooperation between media industries and audiences willing to move among platforms in search of satisfying content (Jenkins, 2006). Because “convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make

connections among dispersed media content” (p. 3), studying how audiences make sense of and exploit the opportunities for media engagement afforded in the current media environment is essential to understanding media engagement as a cultural practice.

Ethnography’s usefulness for this dissertation stems from its ability to place localized, often individualized experiences and practices in conversation with broader discourses of gender, religion, and nationality through an emphasis on “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). Through rich description, ethnographers strive to not only identify deeply ingrained, even routinized practices in a culture but also to understand the symbolic significance of these practices. That is, “ethnography contributes directly to both description and explanation of regularities and variations in human social behavior” (Spradley, 1979, p. 10). Thus, ethnography is a process of decoding a culture. Multiple forms of data collection allow ethnographers to access different decoding processes: If interviews allow researchers to explore how people make sense of their cultural practices, then observational data allow ethnographers to document overt cultural expressions, while archival and textual artifacts allow researchers to historicize or map circulating cultural discourses.

### *Politics of participation and representation*

The arguments presented in this dissertation are grounded in the premise that media practices are cultural. Ethnographic methods have been successfully used to examine cultural practices, ranging from romance reading by Indian women (Parameswaran, 2002) to television viewing by Maronite youth (Kraidy, 2005) to the religious media consumption practices of Punjabi families in London’s Southall

(Gillespie, 1995). Ethnography's privileging of participant experiences to build theory is important because it creates a space for voices of communities that are rarely heard, as the aforementioned studies have done.

The experiences of Indian-Catholics are rarely discussed in academic literature about postcolonial India. Although studies about postcolonial India abound, there is a tendency in the literature, particularly that originating from within the Western academy, to homogenize Indian culture, without acknowledging how differences in class, gender, caste, and religion result in experiences that are qualitatively different for different cultural groups. Some exceptions are Parameswaran's (2002) work on the reading of romance novels focuses on the experiences of upper-class, young Hindu women and Mankekar's (1999) reception studies of middle-class Indians in Delhi, and Divya McMillin's (2001) work on media reception by different religious communities in India. More recently, some attention has been paid to the media practices of Indian-Muslims (Khan, 2009). However, in general, the experiences of non-Hindu communities such as Indian-Catholics remain underexplored. This dissertation will contribute to this conversation by examining Indian culture at the intersections of gender and religion.

The goal of "giving voice" to underrepresented communities through ethnographic accounts has a problematic and complicated history within the ethnographic tradition, when early ethnographers reduced cultural others to caricatures through ethnocentric accounts that refused to acknowledge the mediated and privileged nature of ethnographic observations (Clifford, 1988).

I am also mindful that although qualitative research is generally celebrated for its

push to highlight hitherto excluded voices, this move raises questions about why it is that only by participating in a research project are the voices of marginalized communities legitimized (Fine, 1994). Thus, in this project, although participants' cultural practices are viewed and acknowledged as claims for legitimacy, legitimacy for these experiences comes not merely from participation in this project but through an acknowledgement that this quest for legitimacy is on-going and occurs in multiple ways, including in ways those conceptualized by participants themselves (Fine, 1994).

Ethnographers have challenging goals: they strive to describe their sites and participants in ways that reflect the complexities of culture; they try to provide new spaces for and modes of expression; and they endeavor to deepen our understanding of society and culture by drawing on their fieldwork to build theories. However, the practice of ethnography—its writing and doing—remains an on-going challenge. Perhaps one of the most challenging moments for me was acknowledging that the practice of ethnography is in many ways a series of strategic, practical, or inadvertent choices—choices about which places get observed, what and who are observed, which observations are recorded, and which parts of fieldwork data are “harvested” for the final project. Despite trying to provide a detailed, holistic, in-depth view of a culture, the end project is always only a representation of the whole (Clifford, 1988).

The process of creating order—building theory—from chaos—data about everyday life—necessarily involves strategic choices in order to achieve analytic coherence. Similar to other forms of qualitative work, not every story shared or every event experienced are shared in the final report. Researchers more experienced than I



have struggled with this problem of representation through omission and it is to them that I turned in my quest to understand the choices I made and which at times were made for me during my fieldwork. Following Clifford (1986), I acknowledge that all ethnographies are always “partial truths” since language, written or spoken, which is used to communicate a researcher’s experience in the field does not reflect reality but constitutes it. Following Madison (2005), I also acknowledge that subjectivity is at the core of ethnographic inquiry: “Subjectivity becomes all at once a vessel, lens, and filter or every telling” (p. 34). And a difficult but important lesson that I learned during the data collection and analysis phases came from Clifford Geertz (1973): “cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete...it is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion” (p. 29).

Although I entered the lives of my research participants with the idea that I had experienced some of their struggles, as I heard their stories and tried to live their lives, I was quickly made aware of how much life in Mumbai had both changed but also stayed the same since I last lived there in 2008. From my interviews, I quickly realized that few participants had ever had a chance to focus on their own lives and many welcomed the idea of sharing their everyday experiences with me, intrigued that what they saw as mundane and routine was considered valuable and informative. Most shared stories of violence and pain that were important but I struggled to find ways to include their stories in this dissertation without continuing to further the narrative of “Third-World” cultures as backward (Narayan, 1997) and “Third-World” women as victims (Mohanty, 1988).

It was not uncommon for participants to explicitly instruct me to include specific pieces of information, particularly information that related to presentation of their selves or their communities. These were the moments when I was intensely aware that no matter what my participants demanded, in the end, the ultimate choice of how they were (re)presented in my ethnographic account rested solely with me (Bettie, 2003). Perhaps, these moments, where control of the research project was being negotiated, more than most other interactions sensitized me to thinking about my ethnographic practices in terms of ethics and power relations, and internalize what until then I had only read in books: that the practice of critical ethnography must necessarily be an ethical practice, which requires ethnographers to articulate the power relations that permeate research endeavors and emphasize the subjective nature of research (Madison, 2005).

These moments of “thoughtful, conscious self-awareness” or reflexivity are important for all qualitative researchers because the mediated nature of all interpretations makes it imperative that researchers articulate the “place” from which they speak. Articulating one’s position is a way of explicitly acknowledging one’s role in shaping the research process and outcome. As Bettie (2003) explains, research accounts are not even negotiations because there is always a power differential between the researcher and research participants.

In recent times, scholars have begun returning to their homelands to conduct fieldwork, and these scholars have discussed how their familiarity with the field works as a double-edged sword. For example, Parameswaran’s (2001) nuanced account of fieldwork with young Indian women in Hyderabad provides some insight into the

process of “making the familiar strange.” Feminist ethnographers who write about their experiences in their native homelands also point out the tensions that arise because of their feminist leanings and the pressure to be cultural ambassadors (e.g.: Visweswaran, 1994; Parameswaran, 2002). These concerns also permeated my fieldwork experience. Many times, my participants stated that they viewed the Catholic Church as empowering for women, an idea I initially struggled to understand given my focus on the Church’s stance toward issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and contraception. Additionally, I was often uncomfortable with the dehumanizing language my participants used to refer to other marginalized groups such as African-Americans and the Indian LGBT community. I struggled with issues such as intervening to point out why such language and attitudes were problematic or going along with the attitudes in order to build rapport. These tensions highlight that ethnographic accounts are “fables of incomplete rapport” not “fables of rapport” (Visweswaran, 1994). Through self-reflexive accounts, feminist researchers, interrogate assumptions about solidarity based on gender and/or ethnicity and other group affiliations. Although I was similar to my participants in many ways, I also differed from them in many ways, and hence, like Algan (2003), I find the label of native ethnographer problematic because it presumes complete identification with the participants.

Throughout my fieldwork, I was intensely aware of my position as a classed and gendered subject and that my subject position was one of privilege vis-à-vis my participants. A continual consciousness about my subject position allowed me to understand that an ethnography presenting my participants’ view of their culture would

always remain a fiction because my “analytic mediation” would always shape the story told (Clifford, 1986): The text is “not an even negotiation” (Bettie, 2003) because in the end, as author/researcher, I have the final say.

### *Locating the field*

During my fieldwork, I wanted to explore how my participants engage with various media and communication technologies as paths to accessing/embodying/subverting their gender, religious, and national identities. Further, I wanted to explore how their media practices occur in different contexts. Answering these questions required me to conduct multi-sited ethnographic work. Multi-sited ethnographies follow cultural practices rather than focus on cultural practices occurring at a specific site (Marcus, 1995). One of the advantages to such fieldwork is that it allows the researcher to “move beyond the constraints of text and genre” (Algan, 2003). For example, Nick Couldry (2002) explains that he conducted multi-sited fieldwork when studying the role of television because interactions with cinema and billboards occur outside the home.

In urban India, even though most homes have televisions and computers, interactions with media occur often beyond the boundaries of home. For youth, in particular, who often spend their days with friends outside the home, media interactions occur in movie theatres, clubs, or while simply “hanging out” in coffee shops and malls and college campuses (Itō, et al., 2009). Further, the context within which media are viewed or communication technologies are used can influence the interaction. For example, in the home, which programming is watched might be decided by older, male

or female members in the family; while hanging out with friends, however, decisions regarding what is watched are made by members of the peer group. Mobile phone use also differs within the home and in other contexts.

Because I wanted to examine how context impacts my participants' engagement with media and media technologies, I conducted participant observation in multiple sites, most frequently in the local church compound and at a coffee shop and a relatively new mall. Although these areas are typically understood as bounded sites for fieldwork, I often observed my participants in various other settings—while traveling with my participants, in social gatherings, etc. In short, I focused on identifying media practices and noting the context in which they occurred rather than limiting myself to a specific context. Although in theory, multi-sited ethnography is indeed an attractive option, conducting such research was an anxiety-laden process. An on-going negotiation was deciding the fine line between immersion and intrusion. While a bounded site allows one to develop a sense of the actors frequenting those sites and the rituals occurring in those sites, the lack of geographical boundaries made identifying such trends challenging.

### *Approaching the site and recruiting informants*

Lindlof and Taylor (2011) point out that participant observation, which involves observing and recording events and people, is usually conducted in public settings to which access can be gained easily. However, gaining access to the community that the researcher wants to study is an important step in the process. For the most part, I consider myself an insider conducting research in a setting and within a community I know intimately—indeed, I have been a part of the Indian-Catholic community in

Mumbai and specifically, Bandra, since birth. As a young woman, while completing my undergraduate work, I actively participated in many youth activities sponsored by my local parish such as educating underprivileged children, conducting fund-raising events, and teaching catechism. Consequently, I have robust social networks within the Indian-Catholic community in Mumbai. My familiarity with the city and the Catholic community there, coupled with the time constraints under which I was operating, are additional reasons for choosing Mumbai as the research site.

My main method of gaining access to participants was through my social network, and other participants were recruited subsequently through snowball sampling. This approach of using acquaintances to facilitate access is advocated by Lofland and Lofland (1995). Acquaintances were useful in this study because they could vouch for me and help potential participants view me as trustworthy. It was important for participants to trust me and know that I would maintain confidentiality because topics covered in the interview such as sexual behavior remain taboo and a breach of confidentiality on my part could have serious consequences for participants. However, building trust among participants can be time-intensive and given the time constraints under which I was operating, using acquaintances to facilitate introduction helped accelerate the trust-building process.

Before engaging in participant observation, I spent approximately 2 weeks casing the public settings where observations were conducted (casing, in this instance, involved making sure that there were places frequented by potential participants). It is in this context that some of my initial participants became key informants. They not

only pointed me toward popular hangouts but also were willing to vouch for me, an important step in gaining trust among participants, particularly in the local church, where I was quickly identified as an outsider given the tightly knit community that already existed in that space. Spradley (1979) describes the role of informants as follows: “Informants provide a model for the ethnographer to imitate; the ethnographer hopes to learn to use the native language in the way informants do” (p. 25). My informants acted as cultural brokers, allowing me to gain insights into a youth culture that changes rapidly, which in turn helped me hone my interview guide. They were also the ones with whom I spent the most time and therefore, with whom I conducted extended observations.

My goal was to interview at least 30 Indian-Catholic women (maximum number of participants: 40) over the course of 4 months. The interview guide provided at the end of this document was used to conduct the interview lasting for approximately 1.5 hours. Participants were aged between 18-25 years. Although the United Nations defines “youth” as those aged between 15 and 25 years, this project limits itself to those aged between 18 and 25 years in order to facilitate the informed consent process that is required for interviews. With regard to the socioeconomic status of my participants, it is important to note that within the Indian context, most unmarried, middle-class youth stay with their parents and do not engage in part-time work if they are studying. Since all participants lived with their families, their socioeconomic status is defined based on family income even if they were full-time employees. However, different families had varying norms regarding financial support and this affected the access to disposable

income among my participants, even if they all came from mostly middle-class families.

### *Conducting fieldwork*

Conducting fieldwork involved participant observation and in-depth interviews. In order to study the embeddedness of media in the lives of my participants, I too needed to be embedded in their lives. With the goal of achieving such immersion, I attempted to live the lives of my participants as closely as possible and to this end, I conducted participant observation in public areas that Catholic youth frequented such as malls, movie theaters, coffee-shops, and Church compounds. Because of privacy issues, participant observation was not conducted in private settings such as their workplaces, homes, or educational institutions, unless I had the permission of participants to do so.

To explain my level of involvement with the community, I draw on Adler and Adler's (1994) typology, which classifies researcher involvement along a spectrum, ranging from complete member (in cases where the researcher used to be a member of the community being studied or had converted membership); active member (researcher participates and takes on the values of the community); and peripheral member (researcher participates but not in central activities). I see myself as a peripheral member because despite my on-going affiliation with the Catholic youth community in Mumbai, I quickly realized that my participants were social but valued their private time with their peers, and as a result I was not always able to participate in all youth-related activities. Unless I was present physically in the same space as my participants, I was not invited to hang out. This seemed to be less a function of their need to keep the content of their interactions private in terms of my being privy to their interactions, but more a result of



their assumption that these outings were mundane and not important enough to be considered “research data.” Further, for five years, previously, I had lived in the United States, and although I continued to maintain ties with Mumbai’s Catholic youth, I was no longer actively involved in youth projects and activities in local churches. Consequently, while conducting my fieldwork, I categorize myself as a peripheral member.

A guiding question when engaging in participant observation is noting what is happening and how is it happening (Spradley, 1980). Another important part of participant observation is keeping records. These records took on a variety of forms: scratch notes, headnotes, in-process memos, and field notes. Scratch notes are usually brief observations noted on the spur of the moment, and headnotes are similar to scratch notes except that they are mental notes made by the researcher if s/he is in a situation where writing is not possible. In-process memos, on the other hand, include sustained writing and some analysis. Field notes are more complex and detailed and are contextualized (Spradley, 1980). In addition, ethnographic notes include both description and an exploration into how the situation/event was experienced, with the aim of achieving detailed description (Geertz, 1973). Most of my field notes were a mix of description, analysis, and reflection. In addition, I sometimes used my mobile phone for voice memos. These voice memos functioned as scratch notes and were used to flesh out field notes.

Conducting fieldwork was mentally and physically fatiguing. Often, it was emotionally draining. Such experiences are not uncommon. For example, La Pastina

(2006) narrates the emotionally taxing experience of having to hide his sexual identity in the field and the consequent ethical dilemmas that sprang out of that decision, all of which took an emotional toll on him. During my fieldwork, I had participants disclose stories of on-going microaggressions in their workplaces and abuse in the home and other spaces. Although I was able to assure my participants confidentiality and point them toward some resources for mental counseling, it was difficult to accept that this was all I could do since my participants often did not want these incidents reported to authorities. These situations are unavoidable, and following Lindlof and Taylor (2011) recommendations, I used my voice memos as an outlet for these experiences. It was also helpful to discuss these experiences with my advisers, who helped me navigate ethical minefields and provided me with a space to discuss my concerns and work through my emotions.

Participant observations were supplemented by in-depth interviews to explore media interactions in other contexts and understand the significance of these practices. I wanted to examine how my participants' intersectional identities informed their practices inside and outside the home and how the authoritarian discourses in their lives moderated their media practices. Supplementing observation data with interview data allowed me to gain additional insights into how my participants defined their identities in terms of culture, nation, religion, and gender. Further, the interviews explored if media played a role in how they lived out their various identities. As mentioned earlier, snowball sampling was the main method of recruitment for interview participants. These in-depth interviews served to not only complement the data gathered during participant

observation but also highlighted other facets of media interactions, such as sexting, of which I was not aware prior to beginning fieldwork.

### **Catholics in Mumbai**

Although there are no official estimates regarding the number of Catholics in Mumbai, Catholics are estimated to account for 1.6% (17.6 million) of the Indian population, making it the largest Christian denomination in India (Allen Jr., 2009). The Catholic Church in India is divided into three branches or rites: Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, and the Latin rite, with those belonging to the Latin Rite comprising the largest section (Catholic Communication Centre, n.d.). In Mumbai, Roman Catholics or Catholics belonging to the Latin rite dominate, and this group's conversion history can be traced back to Portuguese conversions in India (although some sub-groups claim to have converted to Christianity before the Portuguese arrived). The Catholic community in Mumbai can be further divided into three main groups: East Indians, who claim to be the original inhabitants of Mumbai; Goans, who migrated to Mumbai from the neighboring state of Goa during the 17<sup>th</sup> century; and Mangloreans, who migrated to Mumbai from the southern state of Karnataka (D'Souza, 1989)<sup>12</sup>. All the Catholic women who participated in this study were from the three aforementioned communities.

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<sup>12</sup> Dalit Catholics form a significant part of the Catholic population in India. However, since they are located mainly in North-East India, I have not discussed this community in detail here. Dalit Catholics are severely economically disadvantaged and are part of the tribal population in India. Although these tribes are afforded "reservations" or quotas because of their caste status, on conversion to Catholicism they lose the right to access these reservations because the government does not recognize castes within the Christian community. The Dalit Catholics are also consistently subjected to violent attacks by right-wing Hindu fundamentalists. For a

In the next section, I trace the conversion history and accompanying cultural changes that occurred in the converted population. Thus, this section provides context regarding languages spoken in Mumbai's Catholic community, the impact of caste in Catholicism, and cultural differences between Catholics in Mumbai and other South Indian-Christian communities.

### *Conversion*

It is generally accepted that Christianity came to India by way of St. Thomas as early as A.D. 52 to South India, with historians noting evidence of Christian communities in the southern state of Kerala at this time even if there is no actual historical record of his arrival (Neill, 1984). These early Christians were mainly upper-caste Brahman Hindus prior to conversion, and they continued to practice a number of Hindu traditions even after religious conversion. In particular, the Hindu caste system also continued within these communities, and Rowena Robinson (2003) notes "they maintained their status [in Indian society] by adhering to the purity-pollution codes of regional Hindu society" (p. 41). A major difference between the Thomas Christians (also known as Syrian-Christians) and Portuguese Christians (a community that developed later) is that the Thomas Christians claim ties with Eastern branches of Christianity in Asia rather than Western branches, as evidenced from the use of Syriac in their liturgy. Today, there have been some more recent splits within this Christian sect; some sects are

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discussion about the current status of this community in India, refer to Rowena Robinson's (2013) book *Boundaries of Religion: Essays on Christianity, ethnic conflict and violence*.

affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church and they are called Syro-Malabar or Syro-Malankara Catholics (Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture, 2014).

Frykenberg (2008) notes that most of the literature on Christians in India discusses Thomas Christians because this sect, which mainly comprised Brahmins “had educational advantages, reinforced by cultural legacies, that enabled them to become more articulate and to leave behind written materials, whether in manuscript or printed form” (p. 5). He goes to note that these works “have almost all tended to accentuate their links to high Sanskriti or high Tamil or high Islamic civilization. They have spent much of their lives building bridges between their Christian convictions and the cultural heritage from which they emerged” (p. 6).

When Portuguese missionaries came to Indian shores along with Portuguese colonialists in 1500, the Thomas Christians initially welcomed these missionaries. However, peaceful relations did not last very long. By the mid-1500s, Portuguese missionaries increasingly tried to impose Latin liturgy on the Thomas Christians and eliminate any Hindu traditions that they still practiced. The Thomas Christians in turn looked down on the Portuguese, deeming their lifestyle of excess indicative of low culture. Frykenberg (2008) points out that “As *Pfarangi* [European] clerics learned more and more about what doctrines were held by Thomas Christians and what rituals were being observed, or not observed, they expressed dismay and shock. Similarly, when Thomas Christians beheld the beef eating, hard drinking, and uncouth manners of Europeans, they too were shocked and dismayed” (p. 131). By the end of the 1500s, the confrontation between the Portuguese and Thomas Christians had turned violent, and in

the centuries that followed, these struggles came to mark the relationship between these two communities (Frykenberg, 2008; Robinson, 2003).

In contrast, the Portuguese-Christians who comprise the Latin rite and are part of the Roman Catholic Church have a conversion history and culture that is markedly different from that of Thomas Christians. The Portuguese who landed in Goa in the early 1500s needed the support of local coastal communities to maintain trade relations. For coastal communities, comprising mainly lower-class fisher folk and pearl drivers, building alliances with the Portuguese was useful because it offered them protection from Muslim pirates. Thus, through religious conversion, these Indian communities created alliances with the Portuguese that facilitated economic benefits, which in turn facilitated social mobility (Robinson, 2003). For those within the caste system, this meant a strengthening of their position within this system. For “outcastes,” religious conversion offered an escape from the caste system. The converts to Catholicism adopted a number of cultural traditions of Portuguese colonizers, such as names, lifestyle habits, and even language. Intermarriage was also common among Portuguese men and Indian women. Neill (1984) discusses the complexities of intermarriage as follows:

Albuquerque [Governor of Goa] advised his men to marry the ‘white and beautiful daughters of the Muslims who had been killed in the various battles of Goa. He intended this to be limited to women of fair color, presumably of Arab origin, who were prepared to become Christians. He did not desire marriage between the Europeans and women of dark color, that is to say of Dravidian origin. Things did not work out quite as he had intended. There was little prejudice among the Portuguese against miscegenation, but Indians of good family did not particularly wish their daughters to marry foreigners. The disproportion in the numbers of sexes inevitably carried the day, and miscegenation beyond the limits of what Albuquerque had desired became not so much the exception as the norm. (p. 94-95).

In order to strengthen the Goan colony, the Portuguese rulers also consistently shipped in criminals, mainly men, from Portugal to settle in Goa. Soldiers stationed in the colony were also encouraged to marry Indian women, with the intention that marriage would lead to them settling down in the area. However, because high-caste Indian women were not willing to marry these men, they usually married women of lower castes.

However, sexual exploitation was also rampant, and Neill (1984) notes that “the majority of the resident Portuguese took the easier way of irregular liaisons; the ease with which slave girls of Arab, African or Hindu origin could be obtained led many of them frankly to establish harems” (p. 97). He also credits the influx of Portuguese sailors with the flourishing of prostitution.

Portuguese rule meant not just the spread of religion but also the spread of Portuguese culture and the Portuguese language in particular among the converts. In addition, Konkani, the local language of the region, began to reflect Portuguese influence. Robinson (2003) explains that over time “the Konkani used by Catholics came to contain a number of Romanicized or Portuguese words. ...further, Konkani syntax came to reflect that of Portuguese to some extent...Konkani came to be written and read in the Roman script among the Catholics, a shift which reflected and in turn probably affected the pronunciation of words...among Hindus, Konkani is usually written in the Devnagiri script. (p. 153).

The Inquisition that commenced in 1560 (and ended only in 1812) stands as a reminder of the particularly violent trajectory of the Portuguese conversions. Under the

Inquisition, the Portuguese attempted to impose Catholicism on upper-caste Hindus and given that the Portuguese governed Goa by then, they were able to use a number of coercive strategies to make the practice of religions other than Catholicism difficult. Further, they used “a system of disprivilege and restraints” to spread Catholicism: “Jobs and offices were reserved for those who converted and denied to those who did not. Places of worship were converted into churches, sacred images were removed, and the public practice of Hinduism was prohibited. The landed upper-castes were threatened with the loss of their property if they did not convert” (Robinson, 2003; p. 49). For upper-caste Hindus who converted, the Portuguese offered rewards and privileges within their government. Thus, the conversion strategies used by the Portuguese positioned the Catholic Church as the enforcer of already existing social hierarchies.

Other conversion strategies involved converting landowners, whereby those who were employed by these landowners (mainly lower-caste Hindus) would also convert or risk losing their jobs since converted landowners were forbidden from employing non-Catholics. Such strategies facilitated mass conversions. Those who converted were also forbidden from participating in any rituals and practices that were rooted in indigenous culture. Converts were forced to adopt Portuguese in favor of the local dialect, Konkani. Thus, with the Inquisition the previous strategy where Catholic converts were allowed to maintain indigenous sociocultural practices was replaced by a more repressive conversion strategy where indigenous cultures were erased (Robinson, 2003).

Not all Catholic converts, particularly high-caste converts, found these terms acceptable and some fled Goa into the interior parts of the country such as Mangalore in



South India. However, the Inquisition eventually also spread to these areas (Neill, 1984; Robinson, 2003).

Portuguese conversions occurred also in other areas of India where the Portuguese ruled. For example, when the Portuguese gained control of Mumbai (then, Bombay) and surrounding areas and islands in 1534, conversions began in these areas too. Although there are conflicting reports about the presence of Christian populations in the area prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, historians agree that the work of Portuguese Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries led to the spread of Catholicism in the area (Neill, 1984). In this area also, high-caste converts were afforded access to education and land, while the majority, who were poor fisher folk and carpenters, were not provided education or other privileges. Similar to the situation with Konkani, over time, the local language of the region, Marathi, came to include some Portuguese phrases. The converts also learned Portuguese (Neill, 1984).

The spread of Portuguese among Catholic converts had implications for their lives under British rule. When the British took over Portuguese territories in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Catholics were among the few Indian subjects who knew the Roman script and hence filled the positions of clerks, assistants, and secretaries in the British government. However, it might be that there were caste differences in knowledge of the Roman script even among Portuguese Catholics. Studies such as those by Chaudhuri (1994) reveal that Portuguese Catholics were often hired as domestic help for the British *memsahibs* who were wary of hiring non-Christian servants as household help for fear that it would impact their children's moral and religious upbringing. Drawing on letters written by

these British memsahibs, Chaudhuri (1994) points out that that linguistic difficulties abounded among the servants and memsahibs. Thus, even under British rule, English use among Portuguese-Catholic communities was probably not widespread. Many continued to be employed in low-wage occupations such as fishing, domestic work, salt-panning, and carpentry.

### *Contemporary conditions in Mumbai*

After Bombay came under British rule, the local inhabitants of Bombay who were Portuguese Catholics were given the name “East Indians” to reflect their status as the first Indian-Catholic subjects of the British crown under the British East India Trading Company and to distinguish them from the Portuguese Catholic migrants from Goa and Mangalore who continued to be Portuguese subjects (D’Souza, 1989). Thus, today, the Latin rite Catholic population in Mumbai comprises three main communities: East-Indians, Goans, and Mangloreans. East-Indians, in particular, have long advocated for recognition as “Christians of the soil” (Baptista, 1989) asserting their right to protection of their land and heritage and privileges such as “reservations” in educational institutions and government jobs afforded to other economically disadvantaged classes in post-Independence India. There continue to be stark class and cultural differences in this community in Bombay, which has caused some divisions among the community when advocating for rights afforded to backward classes in India.

Of relevance to this dissertation is that class differences are also accompanied by cultural differences. Those of upper class usually have customs that are more Westernized, while the lower classes have cultural lives that still reflect indigenous

traditions (Baptista, 1989). Further, many East Indians continue to live in small ethnic enclaves called “*gaothans*” or villages within the otherwise highly urban Mumbai. They are also managed by a village head, known as “*sarpanch*” However, today, these *gaothans* are under threat because of rapid urbanization. City planning ordinances are applied to these areas even though these villages were not planned around these ordinances. Development projects such as widening of roads have also led to encroachment of village land and the demolition of roadside crosses in these areas. Some of these *gaothans* were also declared “slums” by the Mumbai government, much to the chagrin of the locals who see these villages as areas of cultural pride (Subramanian, 2013).

Many of my participants were from one such *gaothan* and a surrounding urbanized area, allowing for an interesting analysis of the impact of class differences in Mumbai’s Catholic population. Further, during fieldwork, my participants informed me that people from the *gaothan* from which I had recruited participants were agitating against land-widening initiative, which would lead to the loss of land from the village church. There was also tension within the *gaothan* following the influx of migrants from North India who wanted to use the land in the village for Hindu festivals (Interview with Florence).

Church services, festivals, and religious publications showcase additional cultural differences among the various Catholic communities in Mumbai. For example, the majority of masses in Catholic Churches in Mumbai are in English. The church where I conducted my participant observation has one mass in Tamil on only one

weekday; in contrast, there are multiple English services held on weekdays. On Sundays, there is one mass in Tamil, Hindi, and Konkani and multiple services in English. This dominance of English continues even during festivals when parish celebrations are held in English and a couple of hymns in Konkani, Tamil, or Hindi may be included during the service. This emphasis of English reflects the prevalence of English within the Catholic community.

Western influences are seen in how the community celebrates major festivals: For example, Christmas decorations include plastic Christmas trees and cotton is spread on the tree to symbolize snow. Plastic Christmas wreaths, plastic mistletoe, and artificial poinsettia are also used to decorate homes. Christmas carols that are popular in the West are also common and carol singing occurs in the evenings. However, these celebrations also have local inflections. Christmas confections are often distributed to neighbors and family members and these typically include deep-fried pastry puffs filled with sweetened coconut, sweets made of desiccated coconut and milk, and deep-fried semolina dough in addition to marzipan molded into fruit or other symbols of Christmas. Often, different Catholic communities use slightly different recipes to prepare these. Rather than turkey or ham, which is traditional in Western countries, spiced pork is typically served at Christmas dinners.

Western and local traditions also blend during wedding celebrations. For example, among Mangloreans, brides will wear a white gown for part of the celebration and then change into the more traditional red sari mid-way. Practices such as dowry (although not termed dowry) also occur. Pre-wedding celebrations include ceremonies

such as *roce* (among Goans and Mangaloreans) or *paani* (among East Indians) during which the bride and groom celebrate with their respective families the evening before the marriage ceremony. During the *roce* ceremony, the bride and groom are anointed with holy oil and bathed in coconut milk by family members and friends. During the *paani* ceremony, family members and well-wishers walk (or usually dance) to the local well to draw water, and this water is used to bathe the bride and groom. Even in highly urbanized areas such as Mumbai, these local traditions continue to flourish.

Cultural differences among the various communities are also obvious in matrimonial advertisements in Catholic publications such as *The Examiner*. Below are examples of matrimonial advertisements from a July 2012 issue of *The Examiner*.

Alliance invited for R.C. Goan spinster 27 years B.Com. graduate working for a MNC. If interested kindly email detailed profile with recent photo to XXX

R.C. Goan spinster CA, CS working for MNC, Mumbai, 27/5.5, fair, pretty, from respectable family seeks alliance from well-qualified R.C. bachelors upto 33 yrs. Email with photograph and profile to XXXX

RC Goan bachelor 29 yrs, “6 ft” fair complexion, B.Com, pursuing MBA working as a senior executive for MNC, seeks alliance from RC Goan working spinster’s with good family background. Kindly reply with complete details and recent full length photograph to

Wanted, prayerful practicing Catholic, Mangalorean bride for 30 years, 6” tall, M.S. engineer based in USA. We prefer a graduate; PG or MS working in USA or can get transfer to USA age 25 – 28 years height 5’5” plus email with photograph to XXXX (“Matrimonials,” 2012, p. 34)

As the advertisements show, affiliation with a specific sub-group (East-Indian, Goan, Mangalorean) still matters. In addition, there is an emphasis on “respectability” for women, which has implications for my discussion about cultural citizenship and was also a concern that my participants mentioned. Further, these advertisements reveal that

parents are usually deeply involved in the lives of their children and it is not uncommon for marriages to be arranged by parents, although today, most couples engage in a period of courtship before marriage.

Churches often act as meeting places for youth and youth participation is strongly encouraged in church-sponsored activities, making them vibrant spaces of youth culture. Youth are strongly encouraged by local parishes to participate in community service projects. They periodically organize service projects such as collecting used bicycles and books to distribute among underprivileged children, organizing garage sales, and collecting and recycling newspapers to raise funds for non-profit organizations. In addition, youth are involved in organizing cultural and sports events such as Youth Week, which includes events such as plays, live bands, musicals, talent shows, and fashion shows. Parishes also promote cultural activities among youth by organizing music competitions, plays, and other shows in which youth participate or form a large percentage of participants.

In addition, priests promote faith formation among youth in various ways. During my fieldwork, the Catholic World Youth Day conference was being held in Rio de Janeiro. Participants disclosed that being selected to attend the event was considered a honor and various events were arranged to help youth engage more deeply with the events occurring in Rio. These included having the local bishop address youth at large meetings, organizing all-night prayer vigils, and bringing in speakers to address concerns of youth. Many participants were closely involved in a variety of these activities, while some were even involved in teaching catechism to children and other youth. Finally,

priests were actively involved in reaching out to youth. For example, one priest discussed his involvement with youth on social media such as Facebook: in addition to “friending” a number of youth in the parish, he was a part of youth Facebook groups and used these groups to provide information about upcoming events, post job opportunities, and share photos from youth events.

Groups such as the Bombay Catholic Sabha (<http://www.bcsabha.in>) are concerned with increasing democratic engagement among Mumbai’s Catholics. They help with voter registration and work to empower the community through consciousness raising and performing watchdog functions when the social, civic, and political rights of the community are threatened. Local community leaders are also involved in setting up websites and social media groups to celebrate Catholic culture and discuss the historical origins of the community in India.

One of the most well known contributions of the Catholic community in Mumbai is education. St. Xavier’s College and Sophia College are highly regarded colleges and both are Catholic institutions. There are also numerous Catholic schools throughout the city. Although these institutions have “quotas” or reservations for Catholics, a large number of non-Catholics attend these institutions.

### **Media and telecommunications landscape: from 1991 to current**

1991 was a landmark year for India’s economy. Under pressure from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, India adopted policies of economic liberalization. Punathambekar and Kavoori (2008) explain that economic liberalization

meant that privatization of state-controlled projects increased, and for the Indian media industry in particular, this meant that foreign investment in India media was now possible. Thussu (1999) elaborates that these new policies “encouraged privatization, dismantling state controls and liberalizing media regulation, paving the way for the entry of global media conglomerates into what used to be one of the most closed broadcasting systems in any democracy” (p. 126).

### *Television and movies*

Prior to 1991, the only television broadcaster was the state-controlled Doordarshan, funded by the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Sequeira 1991). Doordarshan’s aims were mainly educational, informational, and focused on nation-building. In the early 1980s, Doordarshan began allowing some private investment for the development of fiction-based programming. Food Specialties Ltd. entered into a contract with Doordarshan and became the sponsor for *Hum Log*, one of India’s most popular entertainment-education soap operas (Kumar, 2005). This model of limited private investment showed the viability of commercialization of media, and increasing commercialization led to a shift in focus from national development to an entertainment-oriented commercial culture.

During the latter half of the 1980s and beginning of 1990s, the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were broadcast on Doordarshan and gained widespread popularity. Asthana (2008) points out that these programs “consistently drew upon a repertoire of images of *rāstra* and *desh* that is, state and nation. These “epic” narratives constructed an idealized past and provided ideological mediations of contemporary



India, which was beleaguered by regional politics and separatist movements raising questions about the character of Indian nation-state” (p. 307). However, rather than creating a unified national identity and increasing the Hindu vote bank of the political party in power, i.e., the Congress (which was the reason the Congress approved these broadcasts), the popularity of these broadcasts were manipulated by the opposition political party, the Bharatiya Jananta Party (BJP), to revive religious controversies. Along with its allies Rashtriya Svyamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the BJP mobilized its philosophy of Hinduvta, which envisions India as an exclusively Hindu nation and conflicts with the secular vision of India as a multireligious community (Kumar, 2005; p. 37). Purnima Mankekar (2004) also indicts Doordarshan with casting the “new Indian woman” as one who is secular, educated, middle-class, and a consumer in primarily Hindu terms in TV shows such as *Udaan* and *Rajani*.

Following the economic liberalization policies of 1991 and the concomitant spread of satellite technologies, there was an influx of foreign programming into India and a number of Indian and multinational companies began to make their mark on India’s media landscape. Prominent players were the Hong-Kong-based STAR TV and India’s first private entertainment network Zee TV. These networks entered a market already primed for foreign programming by the live telecasts of the Gulf War of 1990-1991 by CNN. These channels exploited loopholes in the Indian telecommunications policy, which forbade the broadcast of private programming from Indian soil. Instead, these broadcasters would deliver their programs via satellite from bases in Hong Kong

and Singapore. Local entrepreneurs, known as *cablewallahs*, delivered the content via cables to urban households (Kumar, 2005). The 5-channel STAR TV network became immensely popular among urban elite and generated excellent advertising revenues. By 1996, India was receiving 40 satellite channels, and by 2005, this increased to more than 200 (Kumar, 2005).

However, in a bid to expand its audience, STAR TV underwent a radical change in the later half of the 1990s. These changes included adding Hindi subtitle to Hollywood movies and dubbing popular American TV shows in Hindi. Local Hindi programming was started in 1996. These changes were motivated by the need to expand its audience to beyond wealthy, elite audiences (Thussu, 1999). Thus, in 1998, Star TV effectively underwent a Hindi turn, which Chakrabarti (2014) argues was also a Hindu turn that emphasized soap operas that celebrated affluent, conservative Hindu families. Chakrabarti takes a political economy approach to analyzing this shift in programming by pointing out that STAR TV's decision to "Indianize" was based on audience measurement data from cities that were also BJP strongholds and unsurprisingly advocated for a more Hindu version of Indianness in programming and rejected Western programming for its corrupting modern influences.

The genre of soap operas popularized by STAR TV continue to be popular today and dominate the many private Indian TV networks that have gained popularity since the launch of STAR TV (Munshi, 2012). Zee TV, which arrived on the scene in 1992 mainly drew on Hindi films for its content such as Bollywood song countdowns. In an effort to reduce competition, Murdoch bought out Zee in 1993, and learned lessons in

glocalization and Bollywood-based programming from this buyout. The buyout was also beneficial for Zee, allowing it access to the South Asian diaspora (Thussu, 1999). In 2000, Zee bought back its shares. STAR TV continued its efforts to “Indianize” its content by adopting a localization strategy and launching channels in regional languages such as Tamil and Bengali. Youth channels, MTV and Channel V have also adopted a similar approach of Indianizing content. Thussu also points that other regional language channels also enjoy immense popularity among their various niche audiences.

In addition, English programming continues to be available via Zee and STAR, although in many cases, the seasons broadcast in India lag behind the seasons being broadcast in the United States. Given that the analog networks, the technology via most of India receives TV programming, can handle only around 70 channels, and since the audience for Hindi and regional language programming is larger than that for English programming, cable operators who manage the networks opt to provide their audiences with mainly Hindi and regional channels. However, more recently, digitization of media is gaining popularity and paid television through Direct-to-Home (DTH) television is now available to urban Indian consumers, albeit for much higher than the current norm. Shashidhar (2013) points out that “the move to DTH means Indians now have access to premium channels such as HBO Defined, HBO Hitz and Star World Premiere HD to view current seasons of popular American TV shows a day or two after they are aired in the US—for a price.” Further, according to the Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2013 prepared by media consultancy group KPMG, English-language entertainment is a niche market because it reaches less than 1% of viewers. However,

because this niche is mainly urban and upwardly mobile, advertising associated with these programs generates better revenue.

However, English language programming has to contend with India's censor board. Jamkhandikar (2012) notes, "Making content suitable for family audiences includes beeping out words such as 'ass', commonly heard on American shows. The subtitles in India for such shows often swap an offensive word with a more palatable substitute - so 'ass' could become 'rear' or 'behind.' Also on the blacklist are words such as 'beef,' as the cow is considered holy by India's Hindu majority, and 'sucks'."

There have also been changes in the movie industry. Changes started in 1998 when the finance minister at the time Yashwant Sinha reduced custom duties on cinematographic film and equipment, exempted videocassettes and audiocassettes from excise duties and provided tax incentives. In 2000, Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj announced that the Hindi movie industry was now officially recognized as an industry. This meant that Bollywood, which until then was allegedly mired in financial deals with various mafias and gangs, could now obtain credit from legitimate financial institutions. Mehta (2005) connects these changes in infrastructure with changes in the content of Bollywood movies, which increasingly became family-focused film and created a blend of Indian traditions and global consumer culture. Films that emphasized the experience of the Indian diaspora also increased. For Mehta (2005), such Bollywood content acted as a showcase for the aims of political parties to "globalize the Indian way" (p. 149) and illustrates the patriarchal relationship between Bollywood and the state.

### *Telephones and mobile phones*<sup>13</sup>

When Indian gained independence in 1947, there were 100,000 telephones for a population of 340 million people. Until 1991, penetration of telephones was low, encumbered by bureaucracy and long wait times. Telephones continued to be a luxury and public phones were the norm. Liberalization of the economy also meant a loosening of government control in the telecommunications sector, and in 1994, the National Telecom Policy (NTP-94) opened up telecommunications to foreign and domestic private investors. This policy used a bidding system to decide allocation of the Radio Frequency or telecom spectrum. Licenses were auctioned to private companies; these licenses allowed the companies to provide some basic telephone services that were previously provided solely by the government. However, implementation of this plan left much to be desired and high license payments to the government meant that companies passed on the cost to consumers. At the time, a mobile phone call cost as much as INR 16<sup>14</sup> per minute.

These circumstances finally led to another change in the telecom policy in 1999. This new policy sought to make the telecommunication business more profitable by changing licensing regulations and expanding private investment to beyond basic telephone services. It also led to the establishment of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) in October 2000, which was tasked with the installation of landlines and network management. Today, BSNL also provides mobile telephone service and broadband

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<sup>13</sup> All information in this section is from Donor and Jeffery's 2013 book, "The Great Indian Phone Book," unless stated otherwise.

<sup>14</sup> (approximately USD 30 cents) when INR 16 was half a day's wage for a laborer

internet. However, corruption continued to plague the system, with some companies using loopholes in the system to provide mobile phone services without appropriate licenses. These practices eventually led to new policies in November 2003. Companies that had circumvented the system were fined and all private companies could provide all telecommunications services. When public sector operators introduced dramatically lower service rates in 2008, private sector players were also forced into lowering charges for services. Finally, the cost of mobile phone calls fell to below INR 2, making it affordable for a larger section of the population.

Today, India claims second place in world rankings of mobile phone subscriber numbers (more than 90 million)<sup>15</sup>. Economic liberalization policies that encouraged competition and deregulation also stimulated the mobile phone market by keeping prices low for handsets and services, which in turn ensured an expanding customer base (Singh, 2008; Gupta and Jain, 2012).

In 2012, there were 864,720,000 mobile phone subscriptions, and the trends suggest that this number will continue to rise during subsequent years (International Telecommunication Union, 2012). In urban areas, KPMG (2013) reports that mobile phone penetration is 100%.

Notably, low service charges mean that mobile phone ownership is not a status marker. Rather, the type of handset that is being used confers status. Moreover, the increasing options for cheap Internet access have led to smartphones becoming popular,

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<sup>15</sup> The number of connections is not the best indicator of number of people owning mobile phones since people typically have multiple connections registered in their names

and another status marker is the type of smartphone owned rather than mere ownership of a smartphone.

Although Android phones dominate the market, the iPhone is popular among the economic elite and young, urban consumers with disposable incomes. Among the young women I interviewed, Android phones were undoubtedly the most popular. In addition to the availability of a large number of free “apps” or applications, which led them to choose the Android platform, the quality of the camera phone was an important factor when determining which phone to buy.

Policy hiccups and corruption have plagued Internet services in India since its launch in 1995. Broadband arrived only in 2004, and in 2010, the government auctioned off the 3G and 4G spectrum. Today, both government and private companies provide Internet services. Further, the 2013 KPMG report on the Indian telecommunications industry points out that “The National Telecom Policy 2012 has increased the minimum broadband speed from 256 Kbps to 512 Kbps with a further increase to 2 Mbps by 2015” (p. 168) However, as the report notes, these speeds are still comparatively slower than the speeds in Western countries.

### CHAPTER III

#### SHOWCASING MODERNITY: MOBILE PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR CLAIMING CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

During my fieldwork, two participants, Veronica and Tania, invited me on a short weekend trip to Pune, a city that is a few hours away from Mumbai. From the moment we started our journey on the crowded trains, Veronica and Tania were engrossed in their mobile phones. Unlike most tourists, they did not look up places to visit, transportation information, or check the weather. Instead, they were focused on updating their Facebook pages. Rather than words, pictures were the focus of these Facebook updates. At this point, although the train was still pulling out of the station, both young women had already posted pictures of themselves on the train. This practice of posting and taking pictures using their mobile phones continued throughout the short 48-hour holiday. A significant amount of time was spent using mobile phones to photograph themselves and document the experience on Facebook.

Both women explained that not only did the photos have to be many, but they also had to be varied and aesthetically pleasing. To achieve these goals, they refused going to places unless they were unequivocally scenic. A trip to a local museum was put on the agenda, but we never entered the museum. Instead, the entire trip was spent taking photos in the gardens outside. In addition, much of the weekend was spent dressing up for these photo sessions. Since we were going to be visiting for just the weekend and traveling by train, we had all packed light. To ensure that in each photo session they



were seen wearing different clothes, Veronica and Tania would mix-and-match the outfits they had packed, sometimes swapping clothes with each other and changing their “look” by using different accessories and make-up. Practicing poses in which to be photographed also took up an entire afternoon. During the practice photo session, photos were clicked using mobile phones and then scrutinized to see which poses were photogenic. Both women also used image enhancements such as image filters when taking pictures. As they explained, their “cool factor” depended on how these photos would be received by their audience—peers on Facebook.

Reflecting back on this incident, I was struck by the emphasis on documenting a relatively short trip to a nearby city that is not very different from Mumbai. Veronica, however, clarified this conundrum by explaining that the destination wasn’t important; what was important was that she was travelling and that she was travelling with peers. Thus, the emphasis was on being mobile. Being mobile also meant some independence from constant parental supervision. The changing of clothes gave the illusion of a long holiday even if the holiday in reality lasted for just 48 hours. Finally, the clothes, make-up, and poses were also a reflection of Veronica and Tania’s style, indicating that they were aware of the latest fashion trends and had the confidence to embody these trends. The clothes and accessories worn also emphasized that they had the resources to keep up with these trends. Finally, during photo sessions, Veronica and Tania made sure to include older family members in the pictures. Similarly, among other participants, it was not uncommon for profile pictures to include a family member or a close friend or

groups of friends. Thus, the photographs also showcased the centrality of family and friends in the lives of Catholic women in urban India.

The incident described above exemplifies my argument for this chapter: Young Catholic women in Mumbai use mobile phone cameras to capture and share moments that showcase their mobility, consumer power, understanding of global aesthetics, and centrality of close relationships with family and friends. These themes reflect how Catholic women conceptualize modernity for urban Indian women. Moreover, fieldwork revealed that participants believed that Catholic culture facilitated such modernity, by linking their independence to be mobile and dress in Western styles as a feature of middle-class Catholic culture in Mumbai.

The linking of Catholic culture with Indian modernity is important for the overall argument of this dissertation. Through such linking, participants show that it is not only Hindu women who can embody appropriate Indian womanhood. If appropriate Indian womanhood is equated with being a modern Indian woman, then participants showed through their photography practices that Catholic culture facilitates the living out the terms of Indian modernity. Therefore, I argue for considering the mobile phone photography practices of Catholic women as cultural practices of citizenship because by showcasing Indian modernity through these practices, Catholic women forge connections with a national culture of modernity. These photography practices show the connections between national and local cultures, by emphasizing the impact of globalization on both of these cultures. Because almost all photography practices I observed during my fieldwork involved the mobile phone, I start this chapter by first

reviewing the centrality of mobile phones to youth culture. Next, I discuss mobile phone photography's cultural significance and point out gaps in the literature. Then, I trace the development of the concept of "modern Indian woman," and in the analysis, I connect this concept's current understanding with the photography practices of my participants. Finally, I provide evidence from my fieldwork to demonstrate how young Indian-Catholic women in Mumbai use mobile phone cameras to capture and share moments that showcase their modernity and connect these practices of self-presentation to their Catholic culture and the modern Indian context.

This chapter adds to the literature that frames mobile phone photography practices as practices of self-presentation (Fortunati, 2005), and this analysis extends our understanding of the gendered nature of Indian modernity. It is important to note that using mobile phones and associated practices to understand modernity is not a markedly new contribution (e.g.: Katz and Sugiyama, 2005; Brinkman, deBrujin, & Bilal, 2009; Goggin, 2012) and neither is the linking of technology with modernity. Indeed, these links were established as early as 1997 by scholars such as du Gay et al., (1997) who described the Sony Walkman as "a typical modern artifact and a medium of modern culture" (p. 2). However, it is only recently that mobile phones are being used to understand non-Western modernities. Significant interventions in this regard (particularly in the context of Asian modernities) are Wallis' (2013) ethnographic study of mobile phones by Chinese migrant workers who view the mobile phone as a "metonym for modernity" (p. 142); Goodman and Robinson's (1997) study which points out that mobile phones are a salient facet of the modern identities of middle-class

Asians; and Pertierra's (2002) work on the use of mobile phones by Filipino youth who use the phones to manage the anxieties of modernity. My analysis contributes to this literature wherein technology practices are viewed as cultural practices that help us understand the changes occurring in developing countries in a time of rapid globalization where modernity becomes a privileged identity and an important condition of cultural citizenship. In keeping with the overarching goal of this dissertation—understanding the culture of citizenship of culturally marginalized citizens—this chapter positions mobile phone photography practices as cultural practices of citizenship because they are used to claim belonging to nation by showcasing characteristics expected of Indians: modernity that emphasizes consumption, mobility, an understanding of global aesthetics, and unlike Western modernity, strong ties to community.

### **Mobile phones and youth culture**

Support regarding the centrality of mobile phones to youth culture and communication practices comes from studies wherein youth report viewing the mobile phone as an extension of their hands (Oksman & Rautiainen, 2003) or a part of their soul or a sixth finger (Venta et al., 2008). Further, many studies have focused on the role of mobile phones in maintaining and enriching youth culture (Green, 2003; Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004; Castells et al., 2007; Itō et al., 2009; Mesch, 2012; Crescenzi, Araña, & Tortajada, 2013). These studies show that privacy, sexuality, sociality, and self-presentation are some of the areas of young people's lives that intersect with mobile phone practices such as photography, sexting, and gaming, among others. Researchers also stress the emancipatory potential of communication technologies for young people

because these technologies allow youth a private space away from parental surveillance and a space to renegotiate social rules and roles (Skog, 2002).

What cannot be denied is that increasingly, mobile phones are integral to youth culture. Further, similar to clothing, mobile phones are also a status symbol among youth. Ling (2004) notes, “owning the correct mobile telephone is a way of confirming correct participation in youth culture” (p. 108). This claim found support in data from my fieldwork, where Katy, a 21-year-old student majoring in economics, explained that owning an iPhone was prestigious but youth who owned such phones were also “show-offs.” Thus, youth also invest differing phones with different meanings and used these to reinforce insider or outsider status.

However, the salience of mobile phones comes not only from merely possessing one or even owning the “right one,” but also in terms of how these devices are integrated into and extend existing cultural practices. During my fieldwork, I observed that participants and their parents both owned smartphones, but the two populations used them differently: parents used the phones primarily to keep tabs on the whereabouts of children, thus extending previous surveillance practices with landline phones. Of course, the surveillance of children and women is not new, but the mobile phone affords opportunities for increased, anytime surveillance that was not possible with landlines. Participants, in contrast, used mobile phones to mainly maintain and strengthen relationships rather than to keep tabs on friends and family. Women have historically used landlines to maintain friendships (Fischer, 1992), and mobile phones afford women new ways of maintaining friendships and building community. In the case of my

participants, these community-building practices associated with the mobile phone also involved including family members and peers in photo sessions conducted with the phone and creating and interacting through Whatsapp groups with friends and family, including those members that do not live in the city or country.

Although scholars such as Turkle (2012) note that social interaction today is increasingly mediated by technology and is leading to decreased intimacy and increased loneliness, other scholars report that among youth, calls and text messages sent via mobile phones are also used to develop and cultivate friendships, including romantic relationships (Ling & Yttri, 2002; Itō, 2005; Lenhart et al., 2010). Thus, “whether the mobile phone functions as a socially conservative or transformative tool is determined by its status as a socio-technical device, embedded in specific social contexts and power geometries” (Itō, 2005; p. 146). By emphasizing that the mobile phone is a “socio-technical device,” Itō draws attention to the idea that mobile phones like other technologies do not exert their effects in a vacuum. Rather, the ways in which they are integrated into everyday life are shaped by existing social and cultural discourses that are steeped in uneven power relations. Consequently, studying the meanings invested in communication technologies and studying associated practices allows for some insight into how these technologies reify and/or reconfigure existing power relations. Wallis (2013) makes a similar point in her study, where she describes practices associated with the mobile phone as socio-techno practices: “the manner in which technology, in this case a mobile phone, is integrated into prior social and cultural practices and at the same time creates new spaces or possibilities for their enactment within the specific social

world and material conditions of users” (p. 6). Most studies on mobile phones and associated communication practices, however, have focused on white young men and women from developed countries in North America and Europe. Consequently, scholars have called for studies that disrupt the homogenous category of “youth” by paying attention to how gender, ethnicity, economic class, and religion impact mobile phone practices (Castells et al., 2007; Green & Singleton, 2007; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2007). Studies about mobile phone practices among youth belonging to ethnic minority communities such as young Pakistani-British women and Muslim youth in Denmark have attempted to show that the minority status of these youth shapes their mobile phone practices (Green, 2007). For Muslim women in Denmark, for example, virtual spaces that are accessed through their mobile phone allow them to negotiate morality and visibility (Waltrop, 2013). Further, Pakistani-British youth report using mobile phones to communicate with other Pakistani-British youth in Punjabi rather than in English (Green & Singleton, 2007), which helped strengthen community ties.

In addition to variations in practices among youth of different ethnicities in Western countries, Green (2007) points out that the class, ethnicity, and gender of youth matters in terms of the economic, cultural, and social values that these youth attribute to new media technologies. Other studies such as those by Hijazi-Omari and Ribak (2008), Bosch (2008), and Wallis (2013) have explored the mobile phone practices of young people in developing countries. These studies not only deepen our understanding of the technology practices of youth in developing countries but also expand the focus beyond the economic benefits that mobile phones can provide for people in developing countries

(e.g.: Yunus, 2004; Sinha, 2005; Abraham, 2007; Donner, 2006) to how communication technologies are embedded in cultural systems. The salience of mobile phones in health promotion campaigns that target youth is also obvious from the literature (e.g.: McKenzie et al., 2006; Curioso & Kurth, 2007; Lim et al., 2008; Whittaker et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011; Déglise, 2012). However, for the most part, the ways in which mobile phones are embedded in *everyday* practices of youth from developing countries remain comparatively under-researched, even though the mobile phone is increasingly an everyday technology for urban youth in developing countries.

### **Mobile phone photography among youth**

Typically, in studies of photography practices, similar to studies about mobile phone practices in general, youth populations that have been in focus are youth from developed countries. Studies that have investigated the significance of digital photography practices among populations in developing countries remain relatively scarce. The few that do focus on imaging practices of people in developing countries are usually those in which researchers introduced digital cameras or camera phones into the population in order to conduct photovoice studies or for education or medical purposes (Wang, 2006; Singhal et al., 2007; Green & Kloos, 2009; de Lange & Mitchell, 2012; Harris & Steyn, 2014). However, notwithstanding the contributions of these studies, the abundance of such studies wherein communities in developing countries are introduced to technologies by “outsiders,” usually from developed countries, further propagates the Eurocentric notion of the “digital native” as white, educated, English speaking, (mostly) male who is located in the West or a developed country. Because discussions about



technology in developing countries focus around issues of development and the technology adoption process, they construct the users in developing countries, as “digital migrants.”

Notable exceptions in this regard are studies such as the anthology *Digital AlterNatives with a Cause?: Book 1: To Be* and Wallis’ (2013) ethnography of young migrant workers in China, both of which delve into the cultural significance of the mobile phone photography among marginalized youth populations. *Digital AlterNatives with a Cause?: Book 1:* discusses the creative and political potential of imaging (and other media) practices among youth in developing countries such as Egypt and South Africa and advocate that the term “digital native” be reconceptualized from signifying someone who is *born with* technologies to one that recognizes that it is possible *to become* a digital native. Such a shift allows us to alter research agendas to ones that do not use the new media practices of Western youth as the norm for constructing research agendas in non-Western contexts and analyzing the mobile phone practices of non-Western populations. Wallis’ (2013) research on the mobile phone practices of young migrant Chinese women reveals that the mobile phone helps the migrant workers fulfill emotional needs, enrich their social networks, and overcome some spatial constraints, even though these phones might not necessarily enhance economic prospects. Her findings thus provide further evidence for exploring how communication technologies are embedded in cultural systems and not only economic ones.

By focusing on the everyday mobile phone photography practices of a sub-section of Indian youth, namely, Catholic women, this chapter contributes to this ongoing

endeavor in the academy to disrupt the image of the digital native as white, male, and Western and conceptualize communication technologies as cultural artifacts. By examining mobile phone photography practices at the nexus of religion, gender, and national identity, this analysis shows that the concept of “digital native” is context bound-- there are multiple ways of becoming and being a digital native.

### **Technology and gender**

In addition to scarce information about the technology practices of youth in developing countries, there is a similar dearth of research on the technology practices of women. The absence of such research lends credence to the persistent if flawed assumption regarding the digital native as male and the digital migrant as female and feeds into the long-standing research biases that trivialize the everyday technology practices of women in both developed and developing countries. Cockburn (1983) problematized the exclusion of women in discussions about technological innovations because such exclusions contribute to “the construction of men as strong, manually able and technologically endowed, and women as physically and technically incompetent (p. 203). In a similar vein, Wajcman (1991) highlighted the male biases in the development of technology, specifically in the development of reproductive and household technologies. In *Feminism confronts Technology*, Wajcman (1991) argued that these technologies reified traditional ideas of femininity by cementing motherhood and domestic work as essential components of womanhood. Thus, rather than allowing for “choice,” which suggests that technologies are gender neutral, in practice, “technologies for women” do not disrupt traditional notions of femininity.

Judy Wajcman (1991) and Cockburn & Ormrod (1993) uncover the processes via which technologies become gendered, or more specifically, they show that technologies are developed and appropriated within existing social contexts, such that within a patriarchal society, they reify traditional gender roles and relations. Their conclusions find additional support in the research of other feminist media scholars such as Ann Gray (1992) and Dorothy Hobson (1982). Gray (1992) concluded that technologies are socially situated objects following her research about VCR use by women. Her participants said that they resisted learning how to operate the VCR because doing so would add VCR programming to their list of household chores and therefore, it was to their advantage to not learn how to operate the new technology. Dorothy Hobson's (1982) research among middle-class American housewives revealed that women considered television viewing a guilty pleasure because they viewed the home as a place of work rather than leisure, unlike their husbands from whom television viewing was a form of entertainment and tied to ideas about the home as a place of leisure. These early studies not only explained how the communication technologies were integrated into domestic life but also pointed out differences in how they were integrated into the domestic lives of men and women. Thus, the work of these feminist scholars shows that gender both shapes and is shaped by technology.

The social construction approach used by the abovementioned scholars stands in opposition to the claims made by some eco-feminists (Griffin, 1978) that women are inherently closer to nature and therefore "anti-technology" (if technology is seen as antithetical to nature). Such essentialist arguments ultimately hurt feminist goals because

they can easily be twisted to frame women as biologically incapable of developing technical skills and perpetuate female stereotypes of technological incompetence. Realizing the detrimental features of arguments that link women to nature led cyberfeminist Donna Haraway (1991) to state that she “would rather be a cyborg than a goddess” (p. 181) as a way of rejecting the spiritual and biological connection between women and nature and affirming the emancipatory possibilities that technology affords from oppressive formulations of gender identity.

By focusing on the cultural significance of mobile phone photography practices, this chapter shifts the focus away from issues of economic empowerment and redirects attention to the cultural significance of practices. Further, by viewing these practices as part of a culture of citizenship, this analysis rejects the framing of Third -World women as passive victims (Mohanty, 1988) and instead argues for reframing them as actively involved in constructing culture and countering marginalizing discourses. Finally, by emphasizing the role of gender and religion in mobile phone photography practices, this analysis answers the call of feminist scholars (Kennedy, 2005; Gajjala, 2002) to analyze how issues of difference and diversity are implicated in technology practices.

By focusing on the significance of mobile phone photography practices of young women and pointing out how these practices are embedded in gender relations, this chapter aligns with feminist understandings of gender and technology. The analysis presented builds on the social shaping of technology framework, whose roots can be traced back to the aforementioned early studies regarding the technology practices of

women and is useful for exploring how gender and religious culture constitute and are constituted by technology.

In the next section, I trace the evolution of the concept of “modern Indian woman” to explain the gendered nature of Indian modernity before I link this conceptualization of modernity with the photography practices of my participants in the analysis that follows.

By using photography to showcase what it means to be a modern Indian woman, participants linked modernity with Indianness and thus, through their mobile phone photography they show that embodying modernity also allows them shift their position from “not Indian enough” to “appropriately Indian.” Thus, embodying Indian modernity allows access to cultural citizenship and mobile phone photography practices become cultural practices of citizenship.

### **In search of the “modern Indian woman”**

Modernity is typically understood as a break from tradition and an embrace of change and the future. However, for this break to occur and become a force that pushes individuals toward modernity, modernity needs to be become a concept that can be envisioned and imagined. To understand how modernity is conceptualized in the developing world, it is crucial to understand the processes within which this modernity is constituted (Appadurai, 1996). For Appadurai, modernity is a product of the “imagination,” which is constituted within the forces of globalization. A key force in the globalization process is the media. The circulation of images of alternative ways of being through the media offers new ways of imagining oneself in relation to the state and the world. Thus, his argument views the imagination of modern subjects not merely as

fantasy or simple escapism. Rather, “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (p. 31).

Moreover, modernity is often imagined as the antithesis of tradition. If tradition is about local ties, then modernity is about global ties. A hallmark of modernity is its emphasis on movement—of ideas, bodies, and products crossing boundaries, previously thought to be impervious. Thus, to become modern is to not to just engage with but embrace the forces and products of globalization. Engagement with global media, for example, not only allows one to imagine a new subjectivity but pushes one into achieving this new imagined self through practices of consumption and self-transformation (ibid).

Mobile phones, particularly smartphones with in-built cameras and the ability to connect to the Internet, also facilitate the process of achieving this modern self because they allow access to global media and the ability to showcase evolving, modern identities through photos taken using phone cameras and edited using photo-editing applications. Engagements with these technologies can thus be thought of as a part of “creative adaption... the manifold ways in which a people question the present... a site where a people ‘make’ themselves modern, as opposed to being ‘made’ modern by alien and impersonal forces, where they give themselves an identity and a destiny” (Gaonkar, 2001, p. 16).

### *Indian modernity*

The recognition that “modernity” is not a monolithic concept and the understanding that it is a condition and process that is experienced differently in various parts of the globe has pushed scholars who study globalization and its various process to delineate the contours of modernity in specific contexts and locales. Of relevance to this dissertation is the nature of postcolonial modernities and Indian modernity in particular, which has been extensively studied (e.g.: Nandy, 1985; Gaonkar, 2001; Oza, 2001; Chakrabarty, 2012).

Although the “modern” subject is typically understood as a subject seduced by change, Appadurai (1996) points out that the break with the past is rarely a clean break. In postcolonial societies such as India, the coexistence of traditional systems and such the joint family system and collectivism alongside modern obsessions with individual, economic success and class mobility exemplify the idea that the experience of modernity is uneven and specific in different parts of the world. Ashis Nandy’s observation that even in India, scholars should talk of Indian *modernities* rather than Indian modernity, an argument that is supported by research on how different religious affiliations shape the experience of modernity in India (Dwyer, 2006), is a claim this chapter takes seriously by focusing on how Catholic culture informs the experience of modernity for my participants. Thus, Nandy’s (1985) point that in modern India, religion continues to matter, even if in the West, modernity is typically associated with a decline in religion, is also supported in this chapter.

Further, Oza (2001) argues for understanding India's encounters with modernity as ones where traditions flourished rather than were replaced. To make this point, she discusses the 1996 Miss World pageant that was to be held in India. This global media event was to showcase "modern India" to the world, and the vision of India presented was one that simultaneously celebrated Westernization and Indian culture. She arrives at this analysis through a detailed analysis of the preparations for the pageant and the stage in particular.

An extravagantly designed stage on which the main pageant would be held and telecast worldwide achieved this balance. The stage, designed to reflect India's ancient culture, drew on architectural motifs of traditional temples and caves. In addition, the theme of the pageant, "Kanyakumari to Kashmir," was crafted to show India's cultural diversity and, according to an official press release, sought to "project unity amidst diversity to remind the people of mother Earth that all human beings belong to one big global family." (p. 1076)

However, as Oza (2001) points out, the pageant also constructed modern India in primarily Hindu terms by refusing to include Mughal motifs and thus erasing the cultural history of minority groups. While such spectacles might imagine a national unity, in reality, such unity is constantly challenged on the ground, with these challenges becoming most obvious when they take a violent turn in the shape of riots and protests that reflect persistent religious, caste, and class tensions. These challenges reflect not only the unevenness in how modernity is experienced by Indian citizens but also a rejection of a single definition of "Indian modernity" by Indians.

Although any discussion of Indian modernities involves the ways in which the "West" has been appropriated within Indian traditions, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012) points out that the "West" is a moving target in these discussions of Indian modernity.



Using the example of right-wing attacks of people celebrating Valentine's Day in India and the subsequent feminist activism that followed, Chakrabarty notes "The West here [in India] is a figure split completely between the idea of immoral sexual promiscuity on the one hand and the right to sexual expression, consumption, choice, and lifestyle on the other." The absence of a middle ground is what worries Chakrabarty, perhaps because it reinstates binaries that find no resonance in the lived experience of postcoloniality (Bhabha, 1994). In the context of this chapter, Chakrabarty's (2012) analysis is salient because it pushes the question of which Western elements and under what terms are Western elements incorporated by Catholic women in their conceptualization of India modernity in the face of divisive discourses regarding Westernization in contemporary times.

### *Gendered Indian modernity*

The unevenness in the experience of modernity has also been addressed by feminist scholars such as Felski (2009), who argue that the experience of modernity is gendered. If the modern subject is one who has personal autonomy, can change with the times, move freely across spaces (domestic or international, physically or through consumption practices), and has the resources to connect with global culture, then the implicit gender of this modern subject is male because the female subject is often tethered to private spaces, limiting her capacity to move, consume, or transform herself. Wallis (2008) adds that modernity is both gendered and classed; an argument she makes by juxtaposing conceptualizations of the cosmopolitan with the migrant. In India, too,

modernity should be understood as unevenly experienced—and as this chapter will show, gender and religious affiliation shape this experience.

In the Indian context, the anxieties of modernity (particularly anxieties relating to the break from tradition) have often been solidified through female representations. In her historiography of the “Indian modern girl,” Priti Ramamurthy (2006) points out that the popular and widely admired female movie starlet of the 1920s typified modernity: “Cheeky, cosmopolitan, and seductive, the Indian Modern Girl made her flamboyant and very public appearance as the “worldly and wicked” *sitara*, or starlet, of Indian silent cinema; as an icon of commodity culture; and as the ‘English-educated’ college girl (*kallege ladki*) in the 1920s and 1930s” (p. 197). Although this Indian Modern Girl enjoyed mass appeal, her unbridled sexuality, Anglo-Indian identity, and consumption of Western products became a cause for anxiety for anticolonialists and in the 1940s, she was replaced by the new Nationalist woman—“the spiritual, self-sacrificing bearer of a higher capacity to withstand pain, especially that of British violence...the New Woman of nationalist feminism expressed her agency on the streets, protesting foreign consumption, especially of cloth and foreign fashion, not embracing it” (p. 204). Ramamurthy further elaborates that the erasure and subsequent positioning of the Indian Modern Girl of the 1920s as anti-nationalist has had consequences for postcolonial Indian society, wherein markers of sexual expression, Western dress, and disfluencies in Hindi are coded as anti-nationalist.

The influx of Western products (consumer goods, corporations, media, etc.), which started in the 1990s as a result of economic liberalization policies, led to concerns

about Western culture corrupting Indian society. These concerns are seen in the ideologies espoused by conservative right-wing groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which claim to protect Indian society from “toxic” foreign values. Silva (2005) points out that in 1980, Golwalkar, a leader of the RSS wrote that the “pure and sublime character” of the Hindu nation has been sullied by “a thousand-year long corroding influence of foreigners.” The rise of these groups and anti-foreign sentiment emphasizes a worrying trend in Indian society wherein Indianness is being yoked to Hinduism. Coding Indianness through religious affiliation is particularly worrying for religious minority groups, whose culture might differ from that of Hindus.

For Catholic women, in particular, the linking of Westernization to anti-Indianness is particularly problematic because Christian culture is typically viewed as Western and in today’s context of saffron nationalism, as anti-Indian. Although the Indian-Catholic community itself might enact strict morality, perceptions of the women of this community are usually as temptress and sexually available persist, particularly in Indian media. For example, Kasbekar (2001) points out the characterization of the Anglo-Indian movie star Helen in the 1960s “as the overWesternized femme fatale, the vamp provided the antithesis to the ideal [Indian] woman’s embodiment of chastity, by her uncontrolled female lust and wantonness. With names like ‘Rosie’ or ‘Mary,’ she was parodied as either an Anglo-Indian (a racial outcaste) or a member of India’s Christian minority” (p. 298). A similar point is made by Ram (2002): “adulterous women or stock characters such as the “vamp” or the gangster’s “moll” are often given Western or Christian names (e.g., Mona, Dolly, and/or Lily) symbolically locating their

impurity alongside the paradigmatic axis that includes Western culture, modernity, materialism and so on” (p. 34). In contemporary Hindi cinema, a model of gendered modernity is advocated for women. A typical story arc involves the female protagonist abandoning her wild, wayward, Western ways for Indian values of modesty and decorum after a turning point in her life, usually an encounter with true love (e.g.: *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, *Cocktail*, and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*)

Because the complete boycott of Western goods does not support the economic policies and interests of Indian elites or the state, there is now an emphasis on developing a modern Indianness that continues to link Hinduism to Indianness but sanctions consumption and participating in the global economy because such participation allows for the economic development of the state. For women, this focus on economic prosperity has lessened the stigma associated with working outside the home. Today, economic independence has come to define the modern Indian woman. Government programs for the girl child and rural women<sup>16</sup>, which aim to provide education and microfinancing<sup>17</sup> to enable women to become economically independent, provide further evidence of the state’s focus on the economic dimension of empowerment, while judicial rulings such as a 2007 ruling that defines a woman’s modesty reflect the state’s on-going preoccupation with policing the bodies and sexuality of Indian women.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, the Sanchar Shakti scheme launched in 2011 aims to reduce the rural-urban digital divide by improving digital literacy among rural women using mobile phones.

<sup>17</sup> Rashtriya Mahila Kosh is a micro-credit initiative by the Indian government to promote entrepreneurship among poor women.

Thus, although the modern Indian woman might be financially independent, she is expected to be sexually restrained. Munshi's (2004) analysis of visual media related to Indian beauty queens points out that the Indian woman is required to embody "good modernization" or modernization without Westernization, with Westernization in this context mainly associated with allegedly "Western" values of sexual freedom and individual autonomy; engaging with foreign capital through a consumerist lifestyle, on the other hand is now an acceptable modern Indian value. Chaudhri (2001) concurs with this analysis by stating, "Today's [Indian] woman is old fashioned enough to care and new enough to tell [the Indian man] what she likes" (p. 382). Her analysis of English language Indian advertisements in the current neo-liberalization era reveals that these texts emphasize the right of women to dare to dream, by heralding beauty queens as ambassadors of this upwardly mobile ideal and effectively erasing poor women (who comprise the majority of Indian women) from public discourse.

### *Catholic women as modern Indian women*

Indian modernity, with its attendant emphasis on conservative sexuality and purity, is a modernity easily accessed and conferred upon for upper and middle-class Hindu women. The modernity of Catholic women, however, is framed as not Indian enough because of perceptions about their sexual freedom and (implied) questionable sexual morality. For example, consider the quote below, in which Amelia elaborates the various negative stereotypes about Catholic women that she has encountered in her interactions with non-Catholic peers.

Amelia: There are like few non-Catholics who have this thing in their mind, “Oh, yeah she is a Catholic, so probably if she is dating then she has slept with the guy way before marriage.” So then it is a mentality that you are a Catholic, and you have the permission for late night parties and you have the permission for overnight. You drink. We don’t drink, but they (non-Catholics) do it behind the back. But it is like they think, “They are Catholic, so they do it, and they have it in their culture.” That is a myth. A regular feedback that we get from a non-Catholic about a Catholic (woman) is, “She drinks. She goes out with guys. She probably did everything.” So that is it. That is the reaction you get from them.

The negative stereotypes that Amelia refers to in the excerpt above—consumption of alcohol, unfettered mobility (spending the night outside of one’s home), and participation in pre-marital sex—show how the modernity of Catholic women is perceived as excessive by non-Catholics when compared against the cultural ideal of “modern Indian woman.” In contrast to this ideal, Catholic women are seen as having no connection with the home (by framing spending nights outside the home as a negative practice) and hypersexual. In this way, although consumerism and materialism have been displaced from being markers of Westernization and are now acceptable facets of Indian modernity, sexual purity continues to be an important marker of true Indianness.

However, as my participants stated repeatedly, this gendered discourse of Indian modernity aligned well with the version of modernity sanctioned by the Catholic Church and their Catholic culture. The long-standing tradition of women in Catholic families working outside the homes (a product of the community’s low socio-economic status) along with the Catholic Church in India’s emphasis on women’s empowerment through education and equal rights to property meant that Catholic women saw themselves as embodying the “economic empowerment for women” dimension of Indian modernity:

They did not see themselves as tethered to domestic roles; instead, their religious affiliation offered them mobility, but this mobility was in the service of economic empowerment not wanton leisure. They also stated that they were allowed to choose their husbands—a choice they felt was not as easily available but desired by Muslim or Hindu women. Most participants also disclosed that they valued and conformed to the Church's teachings regarding pre-marital sexual abstinence, and in this way, they demonstrated that the gendered Indian modernity that was privileged by non-Catholics was privileged and embodied by them as well (Catholic women).

In the discussion above, I have delineated the contours of the gendered nature of Indian modernity. This gendered modernity was showcased by participants through their mobile phone photographs and associated practices. An analysis of my participant's photography practices revealed specific facets of Indian modernity, as conceptualized by Catholic women in Mumbai: mobility, consumption, and appreciation of modern aesthetics (a combination of Western aesthetics and Indian aesthetics and heritage). By showcasing these facets of Indian modernity through photographs, Indian-Catholic women, who are saddled with negative stereotypes that question their Indianness because of religious affiliation, attempt to circumvent this exclusion from national identification. Thus, the Catholic women who participated in this study used gendered modernity as a resource to claim Indianness. Consequently, the photography practices of these women should be understood as practice of cultural citizenship.

In the remainder of this chapter, I draw on interviews and observation data to show that mobile phones photography practices provide an interesting site to explore

how young, Catholic women in urban India conceptualize Indian modernity. These photography practices show that Catholic women conceptualize a modernity that is shaped by the discourses crafted by the Indian government and Catholic culture. In the last section of this chapter, I connect the analysis with the central concern of this dissertation: the importance of mobile phone photography for cultural citizenship.

### **Smartphones: media for modernity**

In 2009, the mobile phone company Motorola launched the MotoYuva series and Samsung launched its Galaxy-Y models for young Indians. Mobile phone campaigns have also increasingly begun to target youth, and these campaigns present mobile phones, and smartphones in particular, as required for modernity. In-built cameras and Internet access capabilities of smartphones make them particularly suited to capturing and circulating various facets of modernity: instances of desirable mobility, consumption behaviors, and display of modern aesthetics. Moreover, these phones can also play a role in strengthening relationships (an important dimension of Indian modernity). The slogan for the Samsung smartphone campaign, “Change to Smart,” (Batra, 2011) emphasizes the links between modernity and smartphones by pointing out that in order to be savvy citizens, access to a smartphone is essential. Participants also highlighted the value of smartphones by terming phones that did not support internet or have a sophisticated cameras as “*dabba*” (box) phones to indicate that these were basically empty boxes in contrast to smartphones that are chockfull of information and capabilities to access, circulate, and transform information.



For Mumbai's youth, mobile phones are about not only about communicating through voice or text, although these continue to remain important functions of the phone. Increasingly, smartphones are valued because they enable easy visual communication by allowing photograph's to be taken, manipulated, and circulated. This emphasis on the camera quality and capabilities was emphasized by participants and also reflected in advertising campaigns. For example, one of the selling points of Samsung phones and other Android phones in India is that they have superior cameras. Nokia Lumia's campaign centered around the phone camera's abilities such as being able to take pictures in low light and elimination of "shaky" videos through features such as Smart Shoot, Low Light Imaging, Optical Image Stabilisation and their campaigns used "real casting" (non-actors who are featured in commercials that have unscripted parts.), where young friends discuss the photo and video features of the phone (JWT Delhi, 2013).

When discussing mobile phone photographs with my participants, they were often willing to scroll through some of the more recent ones taken on their phones. These photos included selfies, group photos, photos of places they had visited, food eaten at various restaurants, and pictures of family members and friends. Some saved pictures were also funny pictures, photo-collages, and memes shared by friends. On occasion, there were religious pictures. The abundance and variety of pictures further confirms that mobile phone photography was ubiquitous among participants.

Moreover, these photographs once taken are also shared via social media and instant messaging, and both of these activities are also facilitated by smartphones. In the

excerpt below, Veronica explains the salience of social media for such visual communication

Marissa: How will you describe your Facebook posts?

Veronica: I don't post anything any time. Only I upload pictures. I'm mainly a picture person

Marissa: So you mainly are a picture person?

Veronica: Yeah, I'm not into that status thing at all.

Not only did participants such as Veronica share photographs but they also often scrutinized, critiqued, and discussed, offline and online, the photographs posted by their peers. In fact, many participants stated that one of the main reasons for being on social media sites such as Facebook was the opportunity to view and upload photographs. It was not uncommon, for participants' first act after "friending" someone on Facebook, to first go through pictures. Similarly, the popularity of Instagram coupled with observations of Catholic youth often spending a few minutes showing the photographs on their phones to each other whilst hanging out further solidifies the salience of peer photographs in the lives of my participants.

In this section, I discuss the photography practices of participants in light of the ability afforded by phone cameras to visually communicate the various dimensions of Indian modernity. The circulation of these photographs through social media sites and the appreciation that they receive from peers on those sites, legitimize the modernity showcased by participants. Thus, these photographs along with practices associated with sharing, editing, and scrutinizing these photos showcase and reify the codes of modernity.

Mobile phone photography as a practice of self-presentation has been studied in detail. Erving Goffman's (1959) work on impression management has been particularly useful in this context, and his work is important for this analysis too because it explains how young Catholic women might celebrate their mobility and consumption through photographs and downplay material constraints that complicate the discourse of modernity that is presented in their photographs. Therefore, these photos can be understood as "front stage" behaviors that mask limitations imposed by structural and material constraints. The quote below gives a glimpse into some of the backstage considerations that are involved in impression management.

Jasmine: Because I don't think anybody should know my personal stuff or rather I don't want the rumor or the gossip just churning the next day. That is something which I tend to, especially when you have family on Facebook and all that happens a lot... I don't have my uncles, and aunts on Facebook at all.

Sabrina: Like we share [photos] with my friends and so yeah, but they will be marked only to my friends or they will be marked to specific number of people. I make sure, I wouldn't want like sharing it with everyone.

Veronica: Even though there are people eve teasing you still come home late, You don't care. And you fight to take your seat in the bus because it's there are seats reserved for women. And you no longer roam in *ghunghats*<sup>18</sup> and *dupattas*<sup>19</sup> and *salwar kameez* and things. There's this huge issue with the Shiv Sainiks in India, a political party which says you should not, women should not wear jeans, it like shows off their legs and things like that but we don't care a shit about that.

Jasmine and Sabrina both identify privacy issues as concerns when sharing pictures. Jasmine was concerned about having family members as part of her network

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<sup>18</sup> Head covering. Usually, refers to the free end of the sari draped over the head.

<sup>19</sup> Long scarf-like clothing typically used to cover the head and/or chest.

because it could lead to “gossip,” suggesting that online expression is usually under surveillance and subject to censure. For Sabrina, also, online privacy was important, and she believed that her photos should be visible only to close friends. Veronica’s quote reveals that what women wear is often a topic of debate and women’s fashion sense is often policed by patriarchal discourses that emphasize modesty by linking Western clothes with immodesty and Indian clothes with modesty. In terms of showcasing modernity through the wearing of Western clothes, Catholic women could be seen as challenging these patriarchal discourses. The back-stage behaviors such as privacy practices are discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapter but they bear keeping in mind when reading the arguments made in this chapter too. Now that I have established the salience of mobile phone photography for showcasing modernity, in the rest of chapter, I delve further into the specific dimensions or facets of Indian modernity as conceptualized by Catholic women.

### *Mobility*

“A lil of me everywhere” is the caption of a recent photograph Veronica posted to her Facebook page (Figure 3). It shows a panorama of a lake in Switzerland with Veronica at various points in the photo. The trip to Switzerland was a novelty for Veronica, a teacher. She was chaperoning students, and the trip provided a break from her otherwise routine lifestyle. When I asked Veronica how she had managed to click what seemed like a complicated picture to me, she explained that the picture was not “photoshopped” but taken using an interesting photography technique: As the photographer (one of her students) moved the mobile phone camera to capture the

panorama, she would run behind him and stand at a new spot. The photograph not only showcased Veronica's expertise as a mobile phone photographer but also allowed her to celebrate her rare opportunity for European travel. The caption of the photograph, "a lil of me everywhere," states Veronica's ambitions to not only move freely "everywhere" but also to leave her mark wherever she goes, a point that's made by her posing in different ways at the various points in the panorama. Veronica's framing of her mobility in this photograph coincides with the ways in which the Indian government emphasizes and encourages mobility of citizens in its narrative of modernity.

Specifically, the Indian government celebrates the modernity of Indians in terms of their ability to move into international spaces. The fêting of non-resident Indians by offering them economic and status privileges are evidence of the Indian government's policies that encourage a sort of diasporic citizenship, a non-political citizenship that encourages those in the diaspora to cultivate a connection with and allegiance toward India even if they spend their lives on foreign soil. Mallapragdha (2006) explains these privileges in detail as follows.

Before India liberalized its economy in the 1990s, its outdated tax laws and regulatory regimes gave non-resident Indians (NRIs) very limited financial options to invest in India. By the end of the 1990s, the Indian state opened up every sector to NRI investments and extended the same fiscal concessions to NRIs that it granted to its resident citizens. Unlike the NRI, the PIO has emerged within official state discourse only in recent times. In 1999, the government announced that a PIO card would be extended to those living abroad and holding foreign passports. Not only would it introduce a visa-free regime, but also confer some special economic, educational, financial and cultural benefits to foreign citizens of Indian descent. (p. 211)

If emigration prior to liberalization was viewed as unpatriotic (Desai et al., 2009), in the current post-liberalization era, successful Indian immigrants are valuable because

they function as global ambassadors for brand India—India as a success story in a global economy (not to mention, the Indian government’s desire to encourage NRIs to invest their foreign capital in India’s economy). The privileges afforded to these persons reflect the value placed by the Indian government on global connections.

A similar desire to live global lifestyles and a privileging of these lifestyles is seen through the enormous success of recent Bollywood movies, where the upper-class, Hindu non-resident Indian (NRI) family is glorified (Punathambekar, 2005). Thus, in today’s India, being a patriotic Indian is about being able to travel into international spaces. By showcasing her trip to a privileged European locale, Veronica’s photograph can be read as an internalization of this dimension of modernity that privileges travel. Similar to Veronica, other participants also posted photographs of visits to exotic, expensive, or otherwise hard to access spaces. Nina, a budding fashion designer, who had just returned from an educational trip to Paris, had posted a picture of her leaning alongside a verandah in an apartment in Paris with the tag “I was here,” a simple statement through which she celebrated her foreign travels.

In addition to foreign travel, local mobility was also showcased through photographs. These could range from vacations taken to places outside of Mumbai, as in the case of 24-year-old Tara, who had a picture of her recent trip to Rajasthan as her cover picture, and Reema, who used a picture of her recent vacation in the neighboring state of Gujarat as her cover photo and profile picture on Facebook. Travel in everyday contexts was also frequently displayed: Amanda posted pictures of a trip with friends to a nearby beach and a shopping trip with girl friends, which became turned into an

impromptu (although not entirely unexpected) photo session. Tania also often posted pictures of nights out in clubs and pubs with her friends. Similarly, Jasmine often used pictures of nights out with friends as her cover photo on Facebook. My argument that mobile phone photography is used to showcase mobility is reinforced in Veronica and Tara's statements provided below, where they makes this link explicit.

Veronica: Not necessary I have to click pictures every day, only if I'm out and there's some event, something happening.

Marissa: Do people use their phone today for clicking pictures and things like that?

Tara: Yeah, they do. There have to be, I don't know, 55 pictures every time we go out.

That photographs are taken when travelling alone or when participants were in the company of friends adds another layer of complexity to the celebration of mobility. It shows that mobility is particularly valued when it allows for an escape from parental supervision. For many participants, hanging out with friends required permission from parents and often came with restrictions. For example, Nina had restrictions on where she could go with her boyfriend.

Nina: I watch movies with my sister at home on HBO and Star Movies or else I am watching movies with my boyfriend in the theater. Sometimes my parents don't know that I am going for a movie because they wouldn't allow me to go for a movie with my boyfriend because they always say, "If you go for a movie you will kiss." Yeah...

Traveling alone to foreign locales was also a rare occurrence unless it was linked to school or work. Consequently, these moments of mobility were valued because they were infrequent. In this context, by showcasing mobility in global and local contexts, participants were also showcasing their independence. Similarly, some participants stated that they made sure that parents within their social networks did not see pictures

of participants in pubs or clubs because it could have negative repercussions such as increased parental monitoring of their mobility. However, certain types of desired mobility remain accessible to only a privileged few. In particular, although my participants wanted to move in global spaces, moving beyond national borders remains challenging, mainly because foreign travel is still expensive and requires financial stability in order to get visas and other travel documents.

The mobility seen in photographs belies the structural and material constraints that participants face in being mobile. This tension highlights participants' aspirations for modernity: inclusion in a global society, which requires being able to move freely across borders—national, global, and local. Finally, to borrow Miller and Slater's (2000) term, these photographs about mobility demonstrate how mobile phone photography facilitates "expansive realization." Expansive realization refers to how "contradictions concerning one's ability, in practical life, to be who one thinks one is seem capable of being resolved on the expanded scale and terrain of the Internet" (p. 11). In the case of my participants, the mobility they aspired to and valued in offline contexts could be performed through photography practices of taking and posting pictures about being mobile, and thus creating an online narrative that presented themselves as "mobile" youth.

This emphasis on displaying their mobility through photos also underlines one way in which participants distinguished themselves from their non-Catholic peers. Despite restrictions about when and when they could be mobile, participants believed that they enjoyed relatively more mobility than their non-Catholic peers.



Sabrina: Like a lot of my Hindu friends when they're menstruating they can't go into places of worship or they can't even if there's a temple at their own house they can't enter your kitchen or you can't enter the places like that. So it's quite restrictive even for this day and age I guess. So yeah, things like that I guess it's nice that we're so forward looking.

In this way, they used mobility to distinguish themselves as “modern” in comparison to non-Catholic peers who were framed as coming from “traditional” families who that placed greater restrictions on mobility, in their opinion. Thus, the “expansive realization” that occurred through photographs that displayed mobility helped participants make visual arguments about the connections between Catholic culture and mobility, and by extension, with modernity.

### *Consumption*

In addition to photographs about mobility, photographs showcasing consumption practices—be it wearing branded clothes, eating in expensive or trendy restaurants, or using expensive beauty products—were often taken and circulated via social media sites or instant messaging by the young Catholic women who participated in this study. These photographs countered media discourses of Catholics in India as economically disadvantaged and further solidified class hierarchies within the community by placing those who could not participate in consumerist lifestyles as outside of modernity.

The importance of consumption is best seen in interactions I observed and participated in, in a newly opened Starbucks coffee shop, where I conducted a number of interviews. This site was saturated with customers engaging in mobile phone photography. Although the customers at the Starbucks varied in age, gender, and other demographics, the most visible and frequent customers were young men and women.

Women, in particular, were usually well-dressed, wearing the latest Vero Moda<sup>®20</sup> fashion, had perfectly coiffed hair and flawless makeup, and sat clustered together, ready to be photographed with their mobile phones. In addition to “selfies,” and group photos, some would take pictures of their coffee and then spend a few frantic minutes uploading to their social media site of their choice (usually, Facebook or Instagram).

The very first time I visited the shop with two participants, one of them quickly clicked a picture of the three of us, checked us into the Starbucks on Facebook and posted the picture. As I continued to conduct subsequent interviews at this coffee shop, it became obvious that this form of photography was a relatively common practice, with many participants posting pictures of their beverage or themselves with the Starbucks beverage on a social media site. In addition, as word got around that I would usually pay for a participants’ beverage during the interview, Maria, who had initially refused to participate called up Katy to confirm if this was indeed true. When Katy assured her it was indeed the case, Maria contacted me to set up a time to meet. These incidents point to importance that participants placed on being associated with and consuming global brands. By taking and uploading pictures of Starbucks beverages, participants could position themselves not merely as drinkers of coffee but consumers of *Starbucks* coffee. That is, by posting photographs of their beverages or themselves holding beverages, they were associating themselves with a globally known brand of coffee. That Maria agreed to be interviewed after realizing that I would pay for her beverage, points out that

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<sup>20</sup> Danish clothing company

consuming global brands might be a valued facet of modernity but such modernity is not accessible to everyone.

Youth, in particular, are under pressure to participate in a consumer lifestyle but most depend on parents for “pocket-money” or a weekly or monthly allowance that makes a consumer lifestyle a challenge to achieve. More commonly, college-going youth receive no fixed allowance but have to ask their parents for money every time they want to buy something.<sup>21</sup> Participants were also aware of the toll taken by increasing inflation on their middle-class families and, therefore, felt guilty for constantly asking their parents for money. As a result, even though participants admired and aspired to live out consumption-based lifestyles, achieving these lifestyles remained an on-going challenge.

Consequently, when participants engaged with global culture through consumption, it was important to document these engagements. Documentation through photographs was thus a celebration of participants’ economic privilege. For participants who came from less economically advantaged backgrounds, for example, visits to Starbucks were probably not going to be a regular occurrence, so the opportunity to visit it for my interview was unique and a moment to be celebrated and documented through photographs. This focus on consumption also reflects the classed nature of participants’ conceptualization of Indian modernity.

Framing consumption as important for modernity has a price. It required engaging in “backstage behaviors” such as painstaking attention to self-presentation and managing

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<sup>21</sup> Part-time jobs are usually frowned upon by parents in middle-class who see it as a challenge to their ability to provide for their children.

of finances, which are elided when the photographs showcasing consumption are viewed without context.

Dick Hebdige (1979) and, more recently, Brake (2013) and Latham (2002) have studied the maintenance of youth culture and identity through practices of consumption. However, while these scholars focused on how consumption is used to maintain a subculture, consumption practices can also be a way to integrate into mainstream culture. For youth, the cost of not integrating into mainstream youth culture can be high. Croghan et al. (2006) explain that despite economic constraints, youth are pressured to join consumer culture or risk social exclusion that can result from “style failure.” Such claims reinforce Bourdieu’s (1984) insight that consumption is used to showcase one’s taste (“manifested preferences” p. 49.) More importantly, especially in the context of claims of cultural belonging, Bourdieu explains that taste “unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others. (p. 49). Thus, taste is used to mark one’s membership or exclusion from a group. Although the importance of taste is dealt with in more detail in the next sub-section (in the context of aesthetics), for this section, the point I want to highlight is that consumption practices are an important part of group belonging.

Similarly, the emphasis on being associated with global lifestyles can also be inferred from the ways in which photographs that showcased mobility also showcased consumption practices. For example, if posting pictures of visiting restaurants was important for showcasing mobility in local spaces, taking and posting pictures of the food consumed was also a fairly common practice. Tania, a self-confessed “foodie,”

often posted pictures of restaurants she visited and the food eaten there. One such picture (Figure 4) is a close-up of a plate of waffles and is captioned “A serious waffle craving SATISFIED. With my best peeps.” This photograph succinctly delineates two facets of Tania’s consumption: (1) By consuming waffles, a non-traditional food in India, Tania could bolster her image as a “foodie,” that emphasizes knowledge about global cuisine. (2) By pointing out that this consumption occurred in the company of friends, she avoided association with crass materialism and imbued her consumption of a relatively expensive meal with moral value: that of affirming relationships.

In her study of consumption in middle-class Gujarati families in India, Van Wessel (2004) noted that “modern consumption is accepted, but this acceptance is morally ambivalent” by pointing out that her middle-class participants critiqued the consumption practices of elite upper-classes as “artificial,” but noting that for them consumption was closely tied to maintaining their middle-class identity. It is this ambivalence surrounding consumption that Tania negotiates by framing consumption as a part of community-building. Popular discourses might bemoan the rapid consumer culture that has developed in India following 1991 as an infiltration of the “ascetic East” by the “material West,” but Tania and other participants disrupt this oppositional positioning by associating their consumption practices with strengthening local bonds.

To return to the interviews at the Starbucks coffee shop, as we waited for our beverages, it was not uncommon for me to be asked numerous questions about differences in the menu, price, and ambience between the Mumbai shop and American ones. A number of these were driven by the concern if the two were the same or if

Starbucks had been Indianized. I candidly replied that the food in the Mumbai shop seemed a lot better—more variety and definitely Indianized, given the presence of *paneer* (Indian cottage cheese) and *tandoori* options. The beverages, however, seemed fewer, and some flavors that are common in the United States were not on the menu. I also commented on the size of the beverages, particularly, the inclusion of the “short” option (240 mL), which is smaller than what is usually in the smallest option (a 350-mL “Tall”) in most Starbucks outlets in the United States<sup>22</sup>.

However, while these glocalization strategies (Thompson & Arsel, 2004) might work for the broad population, my participants repeatedly expressed their desire to have access to global style and cuisines and found it irritating that they did not have access to “authentic” products—for example, that they did not have the “real Starbucks.” A similar frustration was expressed by another participant, Sylvia, when I said that I did not want to purchase anything from a newly opened *Forever 21* store in the same mall: “you probably get the good stuff, *na*? Is this old? The same styles are there in Texas too, *kya*?” I discuss these feelings of frustration expressed by my participants because it points to their desire to connect with the rest of the world, particularly through consumption practices. More importantly, they were irked by the idea that Indians did

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<sup>22</sup> At another Starbucks location, I overheard an employee discussing the differences between the Indian menu and American menu with another patron. The employee jokingly revealed that Starbucks in India had to modify their menu because “Indians like food that’s tasty.” She went on to explain that Indians don’t like to spend money on “*pheeka* (bland) salads and fresh fruit,” and consequently, Starbucks had to abandon some of their fresh options for items such as Tandoori rolls and vegetable quiches. In addition, the pricing differed between Indian and American outlets: in the Indian cafes, there was an extra charge if you did not choose the “to go” option, which might reflect the premium placed on relaxing and community spaces in overcrowded Mumbai. Wi-fi, while available, required connecting by entering a key provided on a scratch card or registering with the help of a mobile phone.

not have access to these products and viewed the glocalization attempts by global brands as paternalistic, because to them, it meant that these brands did not see Indians are ready to participate in global consumer lifestyles.

As the discussion above reveals, consumption was an important facet of being modern. Given that consumption is increasingly linked to a middle-class national identity, consumption was used by participants to communicate that they were modern Indians. Thus, the photography practices of participants such as wearing expensive clothing, using foreign products for adornment, and consuming global cuisine should be read as resources used to position themselves as modern Indians.

It is also important to note that participants did not promote indiscriminate consumption; rather the patterns of consumption that were privileged were tied to ideas of what is considered cool or tasteful or stylish. This emphasis on aesthetics is the focus of the next section.

### *Showcasing modern aesthetics*

During an informal conversation, I asked Katy, one of my participants, if she could differentiate Catholic women from non-Catholic women. She looked at me incredulously and said, “Of course! It’s so obvious. The moment they open their mouths, the accent is pretty obvious. Actually, you can tell even before that...Based on how they dress.” I asked her if she could explain her comment, but rather than explain, another participant, Tania, who was within earshot, suggested that we go for a walk in the mall where they could provide evidence for their claims. It was a Saturday, and the mall was crowded. My participants were dressed casually, in T-shirts and shorts, heavy kohl-lined

eyes (as is common among many young women in India) and almost no other makeup. They wore colorful slippers or slip-on shoes. As we began walking around the mall, Tania and Katy would excitedly point out girls they coded as Catholic by saying “Bobby!” This was a code name that had been agreed upon because pointing out people based on their religious affiliation could open us to uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situations. When I asked about other women in the mall, Katy explained: “Look at what they are wearing. Why would you ‘doll up’ to go to the mall? High heels? That’s silly and who bothers to do their hair, straighten it and stuff to go the mall. And then there’s the clothes. I would never wear a Mango® dress to the mall like some of these non-Catholic girls—they have to wear them here because they are not allowed to go anywhere. We are allowed. We know where to wear what. They have the money to buy brands but nowhere to wear them. And actually, I was told this by a non-Catholic friend. She was sad that she did not have places to wear her expensive clothes so she told me that she wears them to the mall.”

This incident is a useful point for starting to explore the link my participants made between their Catholic culture and their taste in fashion and style. Bourdieu (1984) explains, “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed” (p. 6). Veronica and Tania’s explanations echo Bourdieu’s ideas. Katy and Tania clearly saw themselves as different from their non-Catholic peers because of not only what they wore, but where these



clothes were worn. Thus, taste was characterized not only by content but also context. Wearing high heels to a mall was not stylish—rather it showed a lack of style. Their own style choices were shaped by their understanding of what is appropriate and acceptable attire for the mall. Moreover, by choosing to wear shorts, a choice that resulted in them being stared at by many people in the mall, these women asserted themselves as style icons who have an awareness of fashion and style that is not available to their non-Catholic peers. Further, they credited their Catholic upbringing with molding their sense of style and taste.

Katy and Tania's implication that they know the codes of fashion to be followed in a mall, and presenting the relationship between these codes and the mall as taken for granted requires reflection in order to understand how this relationship is framed as an objective relationship. This slippage between social practices being constructed as objective when they are in fact learned and subjective can be explained by Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which refers to how values and discourses are internalized and normalized via a system of formative institutions such as educational institutions and family settings. Katy and Veronica's claims that they know what is stylish or kitschy can thus be explained as their operating from a habitus of modernity that can be traced back to their embeddedness in Catholic culture.

Katy and Tania's response to their non-Catholic peers fashion choices were also imbued with a sense of superiority. They saw themselves as having a superior understanding of style because they had more opportunities to "practice" fashion. Once again, they claimed that this was an opportunity afforded by their Catholic culture.

Catholic women, in Mumbai at least, frequently wear Western attire, not unlike non-Catholic women. For Veronica and Tania, style involved knowing how to wear an outfit and where to wear it. Style was thus very much a matter of taste—knowing how to put together various pieces to create a look that reflects awareness of global fashion trends. By consistently tracing their understanding of modern fashion back to their Catholic upbringing, Katy and Tania implicated Catholic culture as key to their habitus of modernity. The contours of this modernity echo in Roffe’s description (2003) of the Catholic community in Mumbai as “a nationally disembedded group whose members are globally aligned” (p. 2519). By presenting the community as always having been globally aligned, this narrative of “naturalness” erases how this global alignment was constituted within historical, economic, and social conditions, and instead constructs this “global alignment” as an inherent feature of Catholic culture. Because this competency (knowing how to engage with global lifestyles) is considered “inherent,” it becomes a point of distinction, the basis on which Tania and Katy distinguish themselves from non-Catholic peers. The quotes below provide further insight into their habitus of modernity. In Tania’s case, she classifies her freedom to choose her life partner as a practice in her community that makes it modern.

Tania: Yeah, it is. I wouldn’t say similar to Western culture but it is bit somewhat on the lines where the parents at least give you the freedom to choose who you want to get married to. It is not like that always with the Indians. Like arranged marriages is the thing of India. But it is not like that in Catholic culture. Like at least my parents and my family as I look at they are open to love marriage. They allow you to choose who you want. They even ask you, “Do you have someone or should I start looking?” So I think that is a little Western. Even our, the way we move out with friends and everything and the way we are allowed to dress is also sometimes a lot Western as compared to Indian culture.

Katy, however, take a more cautious approach by noting that even within the Catholic community, modernity is contested because Catholics are “not completely global” but “striving towards it” even though they are more modern than the Hindu community.

Katy: [Catholics] have modernized themselves quite a bit. Unlike Hindus for example, they always wear saris, sleep in saris, and wear the *ghungat* and stuff. They have not evolved from being modernized or global people. While Catholics if you ask me are striving towards it. They are not completely global but they have adapted to society and adapted to changes over the years, which others are still lacking.

By pointing out that being modern is an *adaptation* to changes in society, Katy implies that being modern is *required*. The ability to know how to be global in this context becomes an advantage. This construction of “being global” as a needed competency is also echoed by the Indian government, which emphasizes India’s openness to global capital through economic liberalization policies and aforementioned honoring of NRIs.

Thus, in post-liberalization India, being global has moved from being a marker of un-Indianness to being a marker of Indianness, and for Catholic women, claiming a “naturalized” understanding of global style and fashion can function as a path to not just claiming distinction from non-Catholics but as a path to claiming Indianness in modern India. Mobile phone photography’s role in this process is both to document (through taking photographs) and parade taste (by sharing photos). Tania’s quote below, however, points out to the limits of desirable modernity.

Tania: We have never been restricted on what to wear. We can always wear what we want, unless it goes out of hand and you, kind of, wear a bikini

and go to a club, then it is restricted; otherwise, I don't think we have, like, restrictions.

Tania's quote emphasizes that she does not have restrictions on how she dresses, but by classifying "bikinis" as "out of hand," she points out that considerations of modesty moderate what is acceptable style. Similar limits were obvious in other areas of her life also: For example, in my conversations with Katy and Tania, they often stated that their families were "open-minded" and "modern," even though Tania kept her romantic relationship a secret and Katy lied to her parents about her outings with friends.

For these women, however limited their mobility might be, they claimed that it was more than that enjoyed by their non-Catholic peers. Further, Tania and Katy often ordered clothes online from companies such as BCBG or shopped at stores such as ZARA and Vero Moda. They claimed that their Catholic upbringing not only allowed them to appreciate global aesthetics but also gave them opportunities to engage with these aesthetics appropriately. Their experiences and opinions illustrate the tensions between modernity and religious cultural identity, gender, and consumption in India.

Another aspect of aesthetics was related to the editing of phone photographs. Photos taken with the mobile phone could be edited relatively easily via built-in apps and made the circulation process easier by eliminating the need for intermediary devices like a flash drive or disc or transfer cords, which were previously necessary for uploading photos to social media sites via a laptop or computer. This editing of photographs was an important part of the self-presentation process, and Sonia considered herself something of an expert in this regard.

Sonia: Yes, I used to use Instagram earlier but not much of Instagram, I use more of Pix Art, I use Photo editor, I use Pixel Arrow Meter, these are the kind of apps I use to edit my pictures and I love editing pictures. So there was a time when I owned this phone everyone else owned a Blackberry and they would all send me their pictures and ask me to edit it and send it back to them. That was my constant job of sending people profile pictures to update a good profile picture for themselves.

The practice of sending pictures to friends for editing before they could be posted was relatively common. It further links mobile phone photography with self-presentation but also with a well-defined type of presentation of self—a highly aestheticized one. When I asked participants to show me examples of photos they had taken using mobile phones, they emphasized that the photos they were showing me would never be shared as is on social media sites or instant messaging platforms. Instead, these pictures needed to go through rounds of editing before they could be shared.

A popular photo-editing application that was recommended was Camera 360. Veronica explained that she liked Camera 360 because it was both versatile and free. Often, it was the availability of free apps determined the type of mobile phone that was ultimately bought. For example, Android phones were preferred mainly because the platform has many free apps, while in the Apple App Store, these same apps had to be purchased.

In-built filters in Instagram were also identified as one of the main reasons why participants preferred using this app to share photos. It is also important to note that Instagram is a mainly mobile phone-based app. The web version has limited functionality and is not as easy to navigate. That Instagram was often used to share

photos reinforces the claim that the mobile phone has replaced traditional photography technologies such as the digital camera, at least for everyday photography.

### **High-fashion style**

Recent research (Uimonen, 2013) has shown that self-portraits and profile pictures are a powerful way for people to define their image and perhaps, themselves. That is they are “an immediate signifier” of identity. This focus on image management through self-presentation has led some to label self-portraits or selfies as acts of narcissism (Mehdizahdeh, 2010). However, the significance of selfies and other photos might extend beyond that concept. Van House et al. (2004) point out that personal photography is used to construct personal and group memory, maintain relationships, and for self-expression and self-presentation, and Gye (2007) has extended these themes to explain mobile phone photography practices. When asked about how they chose profile pictures, participants said that for the most part, these were photographs they had clicked using their smartphones or pictures that had been clicked by their friends, using smartphones. In addition, the criteria for choosing the photos were that the pictures needed to make them look good. Jasmine, for example, mentioned that when she wanted to flirt with a boy, she would change her profile picture to one that made her look exceptionally good. Thus, although mobility and consumption was emphasized in the photos captured and circulated, the photographs that were circulated were intensely curated for aesthetic appeal.

Maria often used pictures that Katy clicked and edited as her profile picture. In one picture, she is standing sideways against a pale yellow wall, with her head thrown

back and one leg lifted (foot pop). She's wearing beige high-heeled shoes and a snug, long coat that emphasizes her figure. The colors in the photograph are also enhanced and made warmer, making the image more defined and impactful. The stylized pose is reminiscent of poses of high-fashion models in fashion magazines such as *Vanity Fair* or *Cosmopolitan*, and the pose allows Maria to show her shapely silhouette and showcase her clothes and shoes. Her tilted head portrays her as carefree and uninhibited. In this way, the profile photo paints a picture of Maria as a carefree woman who can skillfully imitate a high-fashion model. The profile picture also shows that Maria can carry off a highly stylized pose and yet make it look natural, despite not being professionally trained. In this way, she manages to construct style and taste, as defined by high fashion, as intrinsic to herself: She does not have to learn to be stylish; she is naturally stylish.

Posed profile pictures like Maria's were quite common, and they pointed to the importance accorded to Western aesthetics among Catholic women. Poses and styles extremely similar to those used by models were common. Popular poses included close-ups with the head tilted, lips pursed together (reminiscent of the "duck-face"), hair styled as "bed-head," or staring straight into the camera, and expressions such as smiling or using serious expressions. In addition to their expressions and poses, another important dimension for profile pictures was clothes being worn and other style markers such as make-up style.

### **Heteronormativity**

In addition to self-portraits, profile pictures were often pictures with a significant other –partner, parent, siblings, or friend. Profile pictures that aimed to be "sexy"

without being sexually explicit were also common. That is, in Reema's words, they needed to be sexy but not "skanky." Amanda, for example, often used highly aestheticized profile pictures to showcase her relationship with the boyfriend. In multiple instances, the photographs only focused on their legs, with the rest of their bodies remaining outside the frame. The placement of their legs indicated that they are facing each other, and in these pictures, one of Amanda's legs was lifted, similar to the now well-recognized Hollywood kiss pose. In pictures where their entire bodies were in the frame, displays of implied physical intimacy were absent. By keeping expressions of physical intimacy at the level of innuendo, Amanda's photographs revealed an aspect of gendered modernity embodied by many of the Catholic women I interviewed—that physical intimacy with boyfriends were an open secret; it was to be implicitly stated but not explicitly demonstrated. In this way, participants claimed modernity in terms of independence in choosing partners but simultaneously maintained an image of sexual sobriety by creating ambivalence about the nature of physical intimacy shared with partners.

These implicit rules regarding what is considered tasteful demonstrate the gendered nature of the modern aesthetics celebrated by participants. While participants avoided posing in provocative poses when the photographs included boyfriends, provocative poses were used when women posed together without their boyfriends. A fairly common pose between Veronica and Tania involved one kissing the other on the cheek, while the other looked straight ahead, wide-eyed with her hands cupped around



her mouth, indicating surprise. Through such poses heteronormativity was emphasized and homosexuality made invisible by trivializing it.

### **Indian heritage**

Mobile phone photography was not only used to showcase Western aesthetics. Mobile phones were often used to take photographs when participants wore traditional outfits such as saris. For the young Catholic women who participated in this study, wearing Western clothes was the norm. During interviews, only 2 out of 30 wore Indian clothes such as kurtas (traditional upper garment that ends at the hip or knees) for the interview. The default dress was jeans and T-shirts or trendy tops. Consequently, wearing traditional Indian clothes is a deviation, but it was deviation that was celebrated and showcased through mobile phone photography. By using these photographs as profile pictures, participants were able to show that they were competent at deciphering and expressing both Western and Indian aesthetics. Janet, for example, had a picture of herself and a friend wearing the traditional fisher folk costume worn by women from the Konkan coast: they wore a colorful “half-sari” with a gold border, draped so that the hem ended just below the knees; colored glass bangles; and flat leather, slippers. Their hair was pulled back and tied into a tight bun that was adorned with orange and white flowers. This picture showcased Janet’s connection with her Indian heritage and when juxtaposed with the other pictures on her profile that mainly showed her wearing Western clothes, this picture make a powerful statement that she is connected to both Western fashion and her local traditions. In this way, Janet demonstrates that for Catholic women, appreciating modern aesthetics involves appreciating both Western and

Indian aesthetics and even if they seem to prefer Western clothes, they are not disconnected from their Indian heritage.

Additional support for the importance of aesthetics in photographs that are circulated on social media sites is that a number of participants vehemently stated that they would un-tag themselves in photographs if they deemed them to be unflattering. During the spontaneous photography sessions (which were more often than not a part of every social outing for my participants), women would often ask to see the photographs and pose again if they felt that the photographs taken were not flattering. In addition, some participants reported that because they were aware that there was high possibility that such photography sessions would occur when meeting up with friends, they made sure the dress well. Important characteristics for “dressing well” meant wearing trendy clothes, preferably branded clothing, wearing well-fitting clothes, and making sure that they were not repeating an outfit to show that they had a wide variety of fashionable clothing.

By using mobile phone photographs to showcase their understanding of “cool” and distinguish it from the kitschy and “over-the top,” these photographs provide a glimpse into how my participants conceptualized modern aesthetics and taste. Further, my participants claimed to have “insider knowledge,” a literacy afforded by their Catholic culture that allowed them to navigate the complicated aesthetics of being a modern Indian.

The care taken for online self-presentation is bound up in an ethics of self-care, which finds expression through practices of consumption that are moderated by strict

ideas about tastefulness. The limits placed on what is considered tasteful—beautiful but not sexual, fashionable but not gaudy—can be traced back to the gendered formulation of modernity that is promoted as the cultural ideal for Indian women.

Specific consumption practices that are associated with aesthetics included buying trendy, designer clothes and grooming practices such as coloring hair, adopting make-up styles of global fashion icons, and extensive, regular skin care regimens that include skin bleaching, waxing, and threading. Designer clothes are quite expensive (a pair of designer jeans costs approximately \$100) and while my participants were not extravagant spenders, they often visited surplus stores. These stores typically had designer clothes that had small defects (for example, a misplaced button or minor errors in stitching) and were therefore not sold in stores. Instead, they are sold at throwaway process in warehouse stores. In addition, they are also sold by hawkers along the roads in popular shopping areas. Veronica, Tania, and Katy, for example, would often text each other information about the clothes being sold by various hawkers or send pictures of clothes in order make each other aware of bargains.

In conclusion, mobile phone photography allows young Catholic women to showcase the links between Indian modernity and Catholic culture. For these women, these photographs and associated practices become a resource for communicating that they possess the cultural literacy to be model modern Indian women. In this way, communication technologies, India's liberalization policy, gender norms, and Catholic culture mingle to create a culture of citizenship that is rooted in showcasing a gendered Indian modernity through mobile phone photography.

## Postscript

In the above analysis, I have tried to show how mobile phone photography practices allow young Indian-Catholic women showcase their modernity, which is characterized by a celebration of mobility, consumption, and display of competency in understanding global aesthetics. Notably, the modernity showcased through mobile phone photography is quintessentially Indian—that is, it also includes a celebration of close relationships and an emphasis on Indian heritage, making it different from Western conceptualizations of modernity, which typically emphasize individualism and break from traditions. Thus, the modernity showcased is not a mere mirroring of Western modernity. In this way, through photography participants link modernity with Indianness. Consequently, embodying Indian modernity becomes a path to cultural citizenship and mobile phone photography becomes a cultural practice of citizenship

However, participants' claims of modernity must be understood within the context of social relations, particularly if they are being used to claim cultural citizenship. Moreover, the undercurrent of inclusion-exclusion dynamics that permeate these practices also point to the importance of understanding how social relations are, in fact, *power relations*.

Who claims modernity? How is it claimed? Who is not considered “truly modern”? These are all questions that can be explored through Foucault's discussions of the power relations that produce subjectivity (Foucault, 1990). Key to this argument is that the production of a modern subject involves a disciplining of the body and mind to accept certain discourses and practices as desirable and normal (Foucault, 1995). This

disciplining does not occur only by top-down forces (policy-level) in contemporary, democratic societies, but rather, the process occurs in a more complex manner-- at the discursive level, through “technologies of subjectivity” and at the material level through “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988). Ong (defines “technologies of subjectivity” as techniques of optimization [that] included adherence to health regimes, acquisition of skills, development of entrepreneurial ventures and other techniques of self-engineering and capital accumulation” (Ong, 2006, p. 6).

During my fieldwork, I noticed media discourses that linked consumption to the concept of “modern Indian woman.” For example, the typical narrative in commercials for fairness creams was that of a young woman who was unsuccessful in love or her career, but achieved success soon after using the fair cream being advertised. The use of the fairness cream was thus framed as integral to her success and happiness. These commercials link consumption with happiness but they also link economic and social success with consumption (Also see Parameswaran, 2011). On a more abstract level, they emphasize that economic success for woman depends on how they present and care for their bodies. If the modern Indian woman is one who is an economic and social success, then achieving such success requires self-care, which is achieved through consumption. The linking between modernity and mobile phones in commercials discussed earlier is another example of how modernity is constructed as a privileged identity. These discourses find further support in the privileging of a global identity put forth by government policies. These discourses ultimately link modernity with nationalism and are internalized and expressed as self-disciplining practices by Indian

youth, who engage in consumption, focus on achieving mobility, and grapple with becoming competent in understanding global aesthetics.

Young Indian-Catholic women specifically internalize gendered discourses of Indian modernity and use it to self-discipline as well as distinguish themselves from others. Further, it allows them to rationalize the Catholic Church that imposes limits on sexual expression as an empowering institution for women because it affords them a way of claiming modern Indianness.

Therefore, participants' mobile phone photography practices should be understood as a technology of the self: techniques that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988). These are practices via which individuals self-regulate or self-discipline. Thus, it is through the interaction of discourses and practices of disciplining that social values are both normalized and maintained. In the context of this analysis, this interaction has led to the emergence of modern Indianness as a privileged identity and the mobile phone photography practices of young Indian-Catholic women thus function as self-disciplining practices that further strengthen the discourse of gendered Indian modernity. These practices might be limiting in terms of how they increase surveillance of the self and peers but they are sustained because they afford privileges-- a path to claiming Indianness, an identity that affords a sense of belonging to nation that eludes young Catholic women.

## CHAPTER IV

### STRUGGLES OF MODERNITY: SAFETY-RELATED AND PRIVACY-RELATED CHALLENGES TO CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

June 27, 2014

Indian women invent anti-rape jeans to battle attack epidemic-*NY Post*

January 25, 2014

Nirbheek is India's first revolver designed for women-*Forbes*

December 17, 2013

iBall Andi Udaan: Feeling insecure, press the SOS button-*Indian Express*

April 3, 2013

Anti-Rape underwear with GPS invented by Indian students, emits up to 82 shocks-*Huffington Post*

Ever since the brutal rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey on December 16, 2012,<sup>23</sup> in Delhi, hardly a month goes by in India without the introduction of a new technology or innovation designed to keep women safe (the list above is far from comprehensive). The increased emphasis on safety and gender in technology design in India is unmistakable. Clothing and mobile phones, previously symbols of fashion for modern women, are now

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<sup>23</sup> On December 16, 2012, Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old woman and her 28-year-old male friend boarded a private bus in New Delhi, India. In addition to the two friends and the male bus driver, there were 5 men on the bus. What was supposed to be a mundane ride back home quickly turned into a violent event. While the bus driver drove the bus around the city for approximately an hour, the 5 men beat up Jyoti's friend and dragged Jyoti to the back of the bus where she was brutally and repeatedly gang-raped; the men also used an iron rod to rape her. Jyoti and her friend were then thrown off the bus and left for dead by the roadside. When the Indian media broke the story, it triggered numerous protests organized by outraged citizens, who called for justice in "Nirbhaya's" name. Nirbhaya means "the fearless one" and was the name conferred upon Jyoti by the Indian media and public because of laws for the protection of rape victims that forbid naming or showing a rape victim. Her legal name was not known until much later after her father used it in an interview.

no longer “simply” about fashion. They are also about safety. Through these innovations, women are told that being modern is a risk, but it is a manageable risk, thanks to the plethora of technologies that they can use to keep themselves safe. That these innovations use GPS and tracking devices to ensure safety, but infringe on privacy goes undiscussed. Thus, for modern Indian women, keeping themselves safe is a responsibility and privacy is a rarity. For Catholic women in urban India, modernity is certainly a desirable identity (as explained in chapter III), but as this chapter will show, risks to safety and privacy are the price paid for this modernity.

This chapter explores the tensions between modernity, safety, and privacy in the lives of Catholic women, the communication technologies that are available to manage these concerns, and the ways in which communication technologies are used to manage privacy and safety—on-going struggles for all modern Indian women. For young Catholic women, embodying Indian modernity allows them to access cultural citizenship. However, as this chapter shows, embodying modernity means constantly negotiating threats to safety and privacy; thus, the process of claiming cultural citizenship is not risk-free. The gendered nature of Indian modernity, which is the focus of this chapter, shows that gender shapes the experience of cultural citizenship.

The previous chapter discussed phone photography practices in order to point out how Indian-Catholic women use these practices to showcase Indian modernity. By analyzing these practices, I argued that Indian-Catholic women see themselves as better equipped than their non-Catholic peers to claim the identity of “modern Indians” by virtue of their Catholic culture. The picture that emerges of Indian-Catholic women, thus



far, is one of women who are consummate cosmopolitans: women who can fairly easily access and embody modern identities because of few restrictions on their mobility, consumer power, and high levels of independence in making decisions about their lives. These are women who are aware of and embrace global lifestyles through their fashion choices. The photographs that celebrate these aspects of their identity, however, paint a possibly overly cheerful picture of Indian modernity because practices, media-related and otherwise, that are involved in achieving this modernity remain obfuscated. This chapter focuses on these “behind the scenes” media practices: practices that are rarely discussed, often taken for granted, but saturate the everyday lives of Indian-Catholic women.

Broadly, these practices are related to safety and privacy. The media practices should be understood as practices of cultural citizenship because it is through these practices that Catholic women ensure that the modernity they embody falls within the norms of what is considered appropriate for Indian women. Thus, these practices moderate modernity and allow these women to maintain their cultural citizenship.

If the practices discussed in the previous chapter highlight how Catholic women in India perceive their lives as different from their non-Catholic peers, then through the safety practices discussed in this chapter, the similarities between the lives of Catholic women and non-Catholic women in India become obvious. These safety practices, mainly technological in nature, are used to negotiate challenges to their mobility in offline and online contexts. Privacy practices such as sexting are also elaborated and can be understood as emerging from the overlap of discourses of gendered Indian modernity

that emphasize purity for women with discourses from the Catholic Church that emphasize virginity. These practices provide further evidence that young Catholic women in Mumbai find themselves equipped to embody the identity of modern Indian woman by virtue of their religious affiliation, and further function as a way to claiming belonging.

This chapter is concerned with how the modernity of Catholic women is threatened by experiences of gender violence and invasion of privacy. It is also concerned with understanding how women manage these threats using communication technologies. I begin by first mapping out the spaces in which Catholic women felt/were unsafe. I focus on four spaces that the “modern Indian woman” is expected to navigate and the threats experienced when my participants accessed those spaces: workplace, educational spaces, public transport and roads, and cyberspace. Next, I highlight the ways in which women used communication technologies, specifically, the mobile phone, to manage these threats. I then contrast the technology practices of my participants with the technological solutions promoted by companies by tracing the ways in which safety and gender are layered on technologies. The second half of this chapter is concerned with privacy. I explore how Catholic women’s manage the surveillance to which they are subjected through technology practices such as sharing of mobile phones, texting, and sexting.

### **Staying safe while on the move in Mumbai**

“What are the challenges you face, if any?” Each interview included this question, and almost every participant quickly answered with narratives of violence—stories in which they were at risk for or victims of gender violence. Thus, safety was an obvious

and on-going challenge. Participants' narratives of violence challenged popular claims that Mumbai is one of the safest cities for working women ("Safest cities," 2003), by pointing out that these claims are not grounded in the lived experiences of Indian women.

As the analysis below reveals, safety and modernity share a tense relationship: For example, mobility is an important aspect of being modern (previous chapter). However, this mobility comes at the cost of safety, i.e., participants often experienced violence and harassment when moving in public spaces. To protect themselves while mobile, young Indian women used communication technologies. Mobility, of course, did not just involve movement in offline spaces. Women, and their digitized bodies in particular, were also threatened in online spaces such as Facebook, digital spaces they used to showcase and celebrate their modernity. Communication technologies were an important feature in the safety narratives of both, my participants and the government, and these narratives along with the implications of stressing technological solutions are explored in this section.

Here, I first discuss the types of violence experienced by my participants. Religion and class plays a role in some of these narratives, but overwhelmingly, simply being women put my participants in the path of violence.

By narrating the experiences of violence faced by these women, my aim is not to "locate them (solely) as victims of multinational capital as well as of their own 'traditional' sexist cultures" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 72). Rather, the violence they experience is one of their many experiences with living out modern identities. Moreover,

in their narratives, these women do not position themselves as helpless victims immobilized by threats to their safety. Instead, what emerges is women who challenge risks to their mobility through their communication practices. The analysis also reveals the importance of contextualizing gender violence by pointing that sources of gender violence are multiple and rooted in discourses about gendered modernity, norms of religious groups, class inequalities, and the normalization of patriarchy. Thus, violence is not an inherent feature of “traditional” or “modern” societies. Instead, gender violence is a result of multiple systems (educational, social, religious, economic, media, etc.) that work together to normalize such violence.

### *Mobility under threat*

That women in India are threatened by sexual violence of varying degrees is not new information. From narratives of sati during colonial times to widespread reports of dowry deaths and female feticide and infanticide in postcolonial times, discussions about India often include violence against women as a central theme. Indeed, in recent times, India has achieved the dubious distinction of being a “rape capital,” a label fueled in part by the brutal rape of “Nirbhaya” Jyoti Singh Pandey and extensive media coverage of the incident (“Delhi gang rape,” 2013). Although journalistic accounts have termed gender violence as traditional or cultural, postcolonial feminists such as Uma Narayan (1997) condemn the labeling of such violence and misogyny as “cultural” because such labels not only replicate “the colonialist stance” wherein Third-World cultures are seen as in need of the West’s civilizing mission but also prevent a close analysis of how patriarchy operates in societies. Although this section focuses on violence against Indian

women, I tie my participants' experiences of violence to anxieties regarding globalization, with the hope that in the discussion that follows, modern Indian women are situated as "political subject[s] within a moral economy that participates in both censoring and creating" violence towards them (Hegde, 2009, p. 279).

Modern Indian women are expected to be educated and financially independent. In order to be educated and financially independent, mobility is important—it encompasses the ability to move into a variety of workplaces in order to earn competitive salaries, the opportunity to pursue educational opportunities, and the competence to craft a digital presence. All of these mobilities are considered important in post-liberalization, modern India where cosmopolitanism is celebrated. Although Indian women value this mobility, being mobile often make them targets of violence.

Phadke's (2005) essay on the mobility of women in Mumbai captures the complexities of mobility for urban women. She points out that "despite the fact that the public environment of a city like Mumbai offers a particular kind of nuanced but nonetheless tangible sense of freedom and space for many women, the responsibility of negotiating any danger continues to rest with them" (p. 43). Narratives of victim-blaming, in particular, show how women are expected to embody a specific formulation of modernity, one that is heavily gendered, in that it emphasizes mobility but also sets down the terms of such mobility for women. For example, women are expected to be financially independent but certain female workers (call center workers, for example) are viewed as morally lacking and sexually transgressive because their jobs involve working at night, when women are expected to be in the home and not in public spaces. Thus,

“when women are conspicuously visible in the spaces of modernity (such as the street and the workplace, places of mixing of the sexes, they are treated as having chosen the “risk” of harassment voluntarily—and are treated accordingly” (Rajan, 1999, p. 8) In this way, when women embrace mobility, they are seen as transgressive, and violence against them gets constructed as a justified outcome for “uncontrollable” women.

*How* women move in public spaces and *which* public spaces are considered acceptable are also defined in narrow, patriarchal terms. For example, wearing Western clothes or patronizing pubs is seen as transgressive and deserving of disciplining, as demonstrated by the case of 8 women who were beaten while in a Mangalore pub in 2009 by members of a right-wing Hindu group called Sri Ram Sena. Founder, Pramod Muthalik, justified the attack, stating: “Whoever has done this has done a good job. Girls going to pubs is not acceptable. So, whatever the Sena members did was right” (“Mangalore outrage,” 2012). This example shows that Indian women are expected to express a limited, gendered modernity—and these limits are grounded in patriarchal norms. For instance, Indian politicians and religious leaders have been vociferous in their cries against “overly” modern Indian women. Consider the quotes below (quoted in Jamkhandikar, 2013)

Swami Nischalananda Saraswati, a prominent Hindu religious leader, referring to the Delhi gang rape in 2012: “Before Independence we were able to maintain our culture and values, but in the last 65 years we have lost a great part of it. Such horrific incidents don’t happen all of a sudden. They happen when the thin line of culture and values are crossed in the name of civilization and development.” (*Times of India*)

Banwari Lal Singhal, a legislator affiliated with the political party BJP in the state of Rajasthan: Demanded a ban on skirts as uniform in schools to keep girls away from “men’s lustful gazes.” Banwari Lal Singhal has written a letter to the state

chief secretary C K Mathew, demanding that skirts should be replaced by trousers or *salwar-kameez*<sup>24</sup>. “The intention of this demand is to keep girl students away from men’s lustful gazes and for their comfort in hot and cold weather conditions.” (*Outlook*)

Abu Asim Azmi, state president of the Samajwadi Party in the state of Maharashtra: “If you keep petrol and fire together then it will burn. There should be a law to ensure that there should be no *nangapan* (nudity). Those who wear less clothes should also be banned.” (*India Today*)

These narratives of victim-blaming charge women with the responsibility of taking care of themselves, disciplining their bodies and behaviors in accordance with patriarchal norms, and being vigilant. In contrast, men are positioned as unable to resist lust and violence, and these traits are framed as natural masculine traits. The causes for gender violence are identified as a loss of Indian morals, triggered by globalization, which acts as a portal for Western values. Gender violence in urban India is thus a misogynistic response to patriarchal anxieties regarding modernity, often reduced to anxieties regarding “contamination” of Indian women by the West. The framing of “the ‘globalized’ woman ...as sexually transgressive” (Hegde, 2011, p. 180), and using “Westernization” to justify violence against such women point to the costs borne by Indian women who embody modernity.

The instances of violence narrated by my participants showed how modernity was often entangled in discussions about sexuality and purity. Drawing on interview data, I now present four types of spaces that modern Indian women move in to demonstrate how mobility is not merely a characteristic of modernity for Indian women, but a condition that requires them to manage threats to their bodies, which are always viewed

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<sup>24</sup> Traditional Indian dress, usually worn by women, comprising pajama-like pants and a flowing top.

as always sexualized and available. The spaces of focus are workplaces, educational spaces, transport and roads, and cyberspace. The argument here is not that mobility leads to increased risk for Indian women. Indeed, private spaces such as the home are also spaces of violence for women (e.g.: Fernandez, 1997; Jeejeebhoy, 1998). Rather, I want to argue that modernity is more often than not accompanied by risk for Indian women—the experience of modernity is uneven, moderated by gender, class, and religion.

To support the abovementioned argument, in the next few pages, I focus on stories of violence narrated by participants. Florence's story occurs in the workplace, a space that offers her financial independence. Lisa's story occurs in educational spaces, spaces that offer her the path to highly paid, prestigious jobs. Narratives of gender violence on roads and in public transport by multiple participants speak to the pervasiveness of violence that occurs as women move between public and private spheres. Finally, Amanda's experiences of cyberstalking show how cyberspace recreates the violence experienced in offline contexts

### **Mobility and work: “I don't work in a brothel. I sit in the office”**

For Florence, a 25-year-old participant, achieving financial independence became a necessity when her father lost his job while she was completing her undergraduate degree in political science. An only child, supporting the family became her responsibility because her mother's limited education prevented her mother from getting a well-paying job. Florence put her dreams of becoming a teacher on hold and entered the call center world. After all, she explained, call centers paid well, did not require extraordinary academic qualifications, and were jobs that were easily available.



However, her decision to become a call center employee brought her gender into focus, by framing it as a challenge that had to be overcome.

Florence: For me personally the biggest challenge has been being a girl, I need to decide on the job that I'll take up. Like my parents are not cool with me working night shifts, they don't like it. They're after my life to quit but at the same time I'm not happy either. Who wants to sacrifice on their night's sleep? I'm the only earning member for the family and this is the only industry that pays well. Any other industry would expect me to put in a few number of years again to study where I won't have any income at home. I may be able to survive on my own with a small income, like maybe a part-time job, but I won't be able to support the family.

In Florence's life, class and gender issues intersect and put her in an impossible position: She has the opportunity to be financially independent but her choice puts her "reputation" at risk. Both, financial constraints and societal expectations about what is considered appropriate female work limit her paths to independence. Tradition and modernity clash. By supporting her family, she fulfills the role of a dutiful daughter, but by disobeying her parents regarding her choice of work, she can no longer be considered a good Indian daughter. Her well-paying job places her in multinational call centers, India's temples of modernity, but by entering that space, she also risks her sexual reputation. She is modern but she pays the price for her modernity. Florence herself notes these costs of modernity for women by pointing out how the rules for men are different.

Florence: Whereas a guy can still get away with it. Even if a guy is not that educated, he can still work anywhere, earn his money, and still look after his family. Whereas the girl needs to do the right job, not get into night shifts. I have so many (marriage) proposals coming and I get rejected.

Marissa: Because of the night shift?

Florence: Because I'm doing a night shift.

Marissa: Really?  
Florence: Yeah. Don't work there, work anywhere else. Don't take up that job. So I put a question across, I said will you look after my family, I'll marry you, I'll quit this job, I'll work in the day, you support my family. Is that okay with you? Of course not. ...So what if I work night shifts, that doesn't mean I work, I don't work in a brothel. I sit in the office; you don't have beds there. ...Any job you take there is always – that is no guarantee of anything, you can always have an affair, even in a 9-5 job.

For women like Florence, modernity is an identity that is both gendered and classed. The gendered nature of “appropriate” modernity is obvious: Indian women are not appropriately modern if their mobility in and into workplaces places their sexual purity at risk. Florence’s presence in a call center makes her shady, ineligible for *shaadi* (marriage), which is considered a necessary milestone in the life of modern Indian women. Further, despite Catholic culture being framed as empowering to women (because within the community, women’s mobility has not been tethered to the private sphere; discussed in detail in Ch. III), Florence’s parents’ insistence that she change her job to a more respectable one, highlights that mobility is afforded to her only grudgingly and is a product of economic need rather than empowerment. In fact, the troubles Florence has in finding a match for marriage because her work casts doubts on her morality show that in Catholic communities, a gendered modernity is at play, particularly when mobility risks contradicting the Catholic Church’s codes of sexual sobriety. Florence’s experiences demonstrate Arvind Rajagopal’s (1999) observations that in postcolonial India, “new gendering processes are braided with existing ones” (p. 58) that are rooted in both class and religion.

Finally, within the call center, symbolic of India's clout in today's globalizing world, young Indian women's sexuality and marital status remain in focus and are viewed as in need of management, protection, or rescue.

- Florence: I'm not married and most of the girls in my team are married or are in a relationship. My manager tends to link me up<sup>25</sup> with almost anyone and everyone.
- Marissa: He links you up?
- Florence: Links me up for no apparent reason, even if I'm talking to somebody, he says, "ah, Florence, there's something." Then I go, "that doesn't mean there's something, I'm just talking to this person." So he tends to link me up with each and every person often for no apparent reason. He would actually try to find somebody for me. Just out of fun, but I don't like it and I've told him on several occasions, "I don't like it, don't link me up with people."
- Marissa: What does he say?
- Florence: He laughs about it. He says. "why you're taking offense? I'm joking." So that's one of the things that happens as a girl, as an unmarried girl.

Hegde (2001) explains that in India, laws were modified to allow female workers to work at night so as to allow them entry into modern workspaces, going so far as to require call centers to provide employees who work night shifts with transportation to ensure their safety. However, the lack of attention to the conditions of work within these workspaces "consolidate[s] the state's patriarchal stance with its neoliberal leanings" (Hegde, 2011, p.182). Florence's experiences as a call center worker bust the myth of "spaces of globalization ...as places of order, control, and predictability, in opposition to the chaos, disorder, and violence of the local" (Hegde, 2011, p. 187). Even as Florence's

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<sup>25</sup> Link up: colloquialism referring to insinuations of a romantic relationship

manager attempts to control her sexuality, Florence's outbursts emphasize that for her at least, the call center is not a safe space; rather, it is a space of violence.

### **Mobility and education: "My future was in his hands"**

Florence experiences modernity at the intersections of class and gender. For Lisa, a 22-year-old, modernity is experience at the intersections of age and gender. Lisa recently earned her Master's in Biology from a prestigious institution in Mumbai. During her program, she completed an internship at a well-known pharmaceutical company, during which she was sexually harassed by the principal investigator of her laboratory. As a student of biotechnology, she aligns with the expectations of a modern Indian woman as one who confidently explores her competence in a technology field, previously dominated by men (Jha, 2013). However, the narrative below highlights the gendered nature of modernity.

Lisa: Every day he used to cross the line. Like when we were working, he used to find a chance and touch me. Like he used to just put his hand around my waist or something like that or touch my butt. When people are really not around then he would take me [aside] and then he would tell me, "Show me your culture<sup>26</sup>". Then he will take me to where my cultures are kept, and the place where the cultures are kept is generally a closed room. There I used to try and defend, like keep my hand and (say) don't touch me, and all. But still, if I do something he will be very aggressive... he will start yelling at me in front of people. Even if it is not my fault he used to yell at me.

Although she went to her professors and parents for advice, none of the solutions presented were viable. Essentially, she was told to either keep silent (professors'

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<sup>26</sup> Refers to the cultivation of microbes and fungi for biotechnology experiments.

solution) or to quit (parents' solution)—neither option was acceptable for Lisa, who saw the internship as important for achieving her final goal: a career as a research scientist. She emphasizes the role of the principal investigator in the statement below.

Lisa: I mean, I knew it that I should do something about it but I still couldn't do anything because *everything was in his hands* (emphasis added)

Lisa was intensely aware that if she lodged a formal complaint against the supervisor, her progress in the program would suffer. It was a point that she made repeatedly, highlighting that one of the tensions for women who are sexually harassed in academic settings is the tension between academic success and violence. Indeed, for young women, academic success might involve enduring violence.

Lisa: The thesis and all everything was in danger. So I had to think about that. The other thing is XXX is a very good company and job opportunities in XXX will be more compared to other places, so I did think about all that also. It is a very good place to work and all. If I lodge a complaint against him then it is difficult for me also in the future.

On the surface, Lisa epitomizes Mumbai's go-getter woman: she spends her free time with her girlfriends discussing future plans and romantic interests and hanging out in malls, private spaces within the public space of the city for upper-class women such as Lisa where they can safely engage in consumer behavior and learn about global culture (Phadke, 2005). A hot topic of conversation among the friends is plans after graduation, which involves moving to Singapore, Asia's newest academic hub, for graduate studies. Seeing Lisa with her friends excitedly discussing international moves and shopping expeditions makes it hard to argue that Lisa's modernity is achieved

through struggle. And yet, her narrative of sexual violence called into question my assumptions regarding her experience of modernity. She might now be contemplating her move to Singapore, a move that exemplifies modern mobility—the crossing of international borders to engage in arguably elite work (academics), but her mobility was hardly assured. Had she persisted in speaking out openly against her supervisor, the cost could have been her career. Lisa’s case illustrates the contradictions that have to be negotiated by young women who embody modernity. In keeping with gendered nature of modernity that is available to Indian women, Lisa is expected to have an unviolated body, but by being modern (in this case, participating in a STEM field) she puts her body at risk: As long as modernity does not involve a direct challenge to patriarchy, female gender remains a central risk.

However, Lisa is not someone who was silenced easily. Her disclosure of the incident during the interview can be viewed in the context of trying to break the “culture of silence” surrounding sexual harassment in India. Lisa was also not alone in her disclosure of sexual violence. Many participants spoke of sexual violence and freely provided names of perpetrators if they knew them. To return to Lisa’s story, Lisa was told explicitly to remain silent by her professor.

Lisa: I was like, “I don’t care about my marks and all. I just don’t care about the 100 marks.”<sup>27</sup> Just get me out of that place.” But nothing happened. My professors were like, “Just one month more. 3 months you already went through all this. Just one month more.” like that. So then at last I just settled that I just won’t tell anybody. I will just pray and only God can help me

Lisa’s interactions with her professor need further contextualization. The college

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<sup>27</sup> Grades in India are called “marks.” Equivalent to “points” in the U.S. Education system.

had an ongoing relationship with the pharmaceutical company, wherein students from the college would regularly complete internships at the company. If Lisa took the matter any further, it would risk the college's relationship with the company, and consequently, Lisa was silenced to protect the college's relationship with the company.

Education is often the path to modernity: it is through education that women in today's Indian economy achieve well-paying jobs that in turn provide them with consumer power and access to privileged spaces of modernity (malls, exotic holiday destinations, prestigious educational and workplace institutions, restaurants, pubs, etc.). Lisa was willing to forgo her education because she felt that price for modernity was too high. That she had to make a choice between getting an education and protecting herself is telling: Lisa's story illustrates that in urban Mumbai, "modernity for women is as much a threat as a promise" (Liechty, 1996, p. 207). Silencing voices of victims of sexual violence becomes a strategy for maintaining the gloss of modernity and ignoring that it is a gendered experience. It involves framing modernity as immune to "traditional" problems despite the lived experiences of modern citizens indicating that sexual violence is pervasive. The solutions suggested by Lisa's professor to "manage" the sexual harassment Lisa was experiencing further point to the limits of modernity for Indian women.

Lisa: She just told me a stupid reason. "Next time when he comes to touch you tell him I am from a very conservative family and all. My family doesn't allow any men touching me and all." The reason she gave I thought was really senseless....

The professor's suggestion that Lisa position herself as modern enough to desire

education but traditional enough to value sexual sobriety illustrates once again how claiming a modern identity is associated with sexual availability and tradition is framed as the only refuge against sexual violence. When modernity and tradition are viewed in opposition to each other, women's bodies become battlegrounds for the clashes between modernity and tradition.

### **Mobility and urban travel: "I only feel safe at home"**

In Mumbai, public transport continues to be the primary means for traveling in the city. Although many middle-class families own cars, in most cases, cars are used by the head of the family, usually a man. Middle-class women, for the most part, use public transport such as buses, trains, and rickshaws or walk. Buses and trains have seats and spaces reserved for women. For example, in Mumbai, local buses have a couple of seats in the front of the buses reserved for women, elderly persons, and disabled persons. In trains also, some compartments are women-only. During rush hour, there are entire trains and buses that are women-only. Reserving space on public transport for women initially started to accommodate for gender norms that advocated limited contact between men and women. Today, these reservations attempt to create a safe space for women on public transport (McCarthy, 2013), although traveling in these reserved spaces is no guarantee of safety ("Women still harassed," 2014). The sexual harassment experienced by women on public transport and other public spaces is referred to by the colloquial euphemism of "eve teasing." Eve teasing refers to "a wide range of acts, from verbal taunting and bodily touching to physical assaults" (Rogers, 2008, p. 79). Drawing on the biblical narrative of Eve as a temptress who successfully seduced Adam into sin,



the term positions women as causing sexual violence by giving men no choice but to give into lust and violence. In recent times, social movements have advocated that the term be replaced by sexual harassment because “eve-teasing” contributes to victim-blaming and trivializes gender violence. However, in my interviews, participants often used the term and so I continue to use it in this section.

None of my participants had their own vehicle, and all used public transport, which were the main spaces where “eve-teasing” occurred. Anjali’s excerpt points out the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in public transport and on roads.

Anjali: Every day you are walking, you are going by train, you are travelling by bus, you are in a rickshaw people are looking at you. I mean men are looking at you and they want to fall on you, they want to touch you and how much ever you try to ignore it or rather voice out your opinion it still happens at the end of the day.

Yes, there is always a fear at the back of your mind that you know suddenly something might happen. Although it is not written that you know that all men have to be the same way but if it is like past 12 and you are sitting in a rickshaw alone, the guy is a driver you know obviously think like, “Is this guy going to reach me home safely or is he going to take me on another track which I don’t know and I will be helpless?”

In her quote, Anjali outlines the various facets of sexual harassment—from ogling to inappropriate touching to catcalls—traveling using public transport or walking on roads makes all of these a possibility. Like Anjali, other participants also considered using public transport a risk; however, it was a risk they had to negotiate on a daily basis as they traveled to work or to college. Unlike upper-class women, these women had no option but to use public transport. The sexual harassment these women experienced is expressed in Anjali’s statement above and echoed in the stories shared by many others.

Amanda: Like if you are in the train alone then you are supposed to, I don't know. They say not to be alone in a compartment, go to the men's compartment. If you go to the men's compartment they are constantly staring at you and it kind of gets uncomfortable.

Priyanka: Actually I don't like travelling by the BEST bus<sup>28</sup> so much. Like if I get a window seat that is good but if I get the aisle seat these buses are such. I don't know why I feel. It is like they are pretty low and I am unfortunately that tall so if I sit on the aisle seat and it is at a low level and these buses are packed. The men have to even face our side and all. They keep staring at us and I feel uncomfortable with that. So I try to take these back seats which might be a little bit higher if you have to sit on the aisle thing. So that way I really don't like

Repeatedly, women reported the discomfort they felt as men stared at them. As in cinema and advertising, in public transport too, we see a replay of Mulvey's (1975, p. 11) claim that "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking [is] split between active/male and passive/female." Under the objectifying, male gaze, the anonymity typically afforded in city's crowds vanishes and women are made to feel conspicuous in public spaces, reminding them that their presence is not entirely acceptable and still worthy of comment. Men staring at women acts as an "exploitation of presence," (Gardner, 1995), a constant reminder to women that they are outsiders in public spaces (Sullivan et al., 2010). However, not all participants passively accepted this form of sexual harassment. Nina narrates an incident that happened at one of Mumbai's busiest railway stations, during which some men tried to take advantage of a disruption and use it to touch women inappropriately. In this case, the women did not remain silent. Instead, they responded with screams, even though other commuters ignored their cries for help.

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<sup>28</sup> Refers to city transport buses.

Nina: You can't walk freely on the roads, even on the roads. You never know when a boy or a man can just touch you. Like I was in a rickshaw, I was coming from college. I was just sitting and a man just put his hand inside and groped me and I didn't know what to do because like I didn't even expect something like that to happen because I want to go home and then I didn't expect this and this is what I get. We are not even safe on the roads.

The last time like at Dadar. Dadar is very crowded. So while you are walking upstairs, it is jam-packed. So that day they had made some lines because it was so crowded. Something happened and everybody started running around. These men kept taking advantage of it. There were women behind you. So they kept running up and down. They just kept touching ladies here and there. The ladies were screaming. Like I was screaming and no one was saying nothing. No one was saying anything.

Like even walking on the roads like I don't feel safe at all. I only feel safe at home. That is why I keep nudging. Everywhere I go I keep nudging people while I am walking because you never know.

Nina also spoke of how she manages the ongoing sense of unease she feels as she walks on roads. Her strategy is to constantly nudge people put of the way, a proactive rather than reactive strategy to managing street harassment. Tara and Veronica, in contrast, used reactive strategies to address street harassment. In Tara's case she was reacting to persistent street harassment. If women experience street harassment, they are expected to change their routes. If they persist in using the routes, harassers take it to mean tacit consent. By voicing her objection, Tara was asserting her right to use her regular route.

Tara: So I used to walk my dog and there used to be this driver. This person used to keep passing by me and winking at me and whistling and stuff like that. One day I got really pissed off and I went and I confronted him and I called the owner down and I said, "What the hell is this?"

Veronica: There are a lot of times I've been pinched on my bum and a friend of mine has taken her umbrella and just hit the person who's done it. Twice I've been poked with a toothpick by a man, yeah, at the station. This is all my railway station encounters. Twice when I was in college there's a man in my ears he has said "you sexy" and I've turned around and said "you sexy too" because I didn't know what to say. So yeah all these things have happened.

In Veronica's case, she responded to her harasser verbally. Through her response, she was inverting the male gaze. However, such assertiveness was not frequent and happened only after women said they felt that had been pushed to the limits of their endurance. The norm was silence rather than assertiveness. Some women said they felt that responding to attacks could put them at risk for further violence, and the participants preferred to take precautions such as returning home before dark, changing walking routes, or nudging people out of the way rather than confronting aggressors.

Shilpa Phadke (2005) points out "The rhetoric of modernity suggests that women are welcome in public spaces without acknowledging the invisible boundaries that keep women out. Given this, it becomes almost impossible for women to legitimately seek to enjoy the pleasures offered by the city without appearing to be irrationally courting risk and therefore violence" (p. 57). Phadke's claims became glaringly real when I accompanied a group of participants to a movie theatre to watch a newly released movie *Ranjhanaa*. I had seen the trailer with the same group before and found it extremely disturbing when we saw sexual harassment being glorified in the movie as an expression of romantic perseverance and passion. During the movie, we took our assigned seats and one participant pointed out that we were seated in front of a group of young men. All the women stiffened and for the rest of the movie made sure

that they steadfastly stared ahead even as the men in the seats behind whistled excitedly and clapped loudly each time the male protagonist harassed his ladylove on screen by waylaying her on streets, stalking her, and ultimately kidnapping her, despite being repeatedly rebuffed by the heroine. For us women, the incident was a reminder that street harassment is not just normalized but glorified as an expression of masculinity. Sitting in the upscale theatre with our over-priced Cokes, pot stickers, *samosas*, and popcorn, we were reminded that class is a fragile boundary against aggression in public spaces.

Just like space, time also becomes an important consideration when moving in public spaces. Women traveling late at night when the typical work and school day is over are seen as not having a legitimate reason to be in public space and can be targeted for violence. This claim is grounded in participants' statements that they take extra precautions when traveling at night. Thus, for Indian women, modernity is space and time bound—there are appropriate times to be mobile and spaces in which to be modern. For many participants, this restricted mobility contradicted the image of unfettered mobility displayed in photographs discussed in Chapter III. Participants often showcased pictures of themselves in pubs and clubs, spaces that they visited late at night, often unbeknownst to their parents. These spaces usually welcome women by waiving cover charges or offering women free drinks. However, what remains unseen in the pictures are the women's jackets bundled up in corners of the pub that are quickly pulled off just before entering or put on just after exiting the pub onto the street. The jackets hide the women's bare arms and shoulders, plunging necklines and body-hugging attire that

women identify as putting them at risk for street sexual harassment. The relationship between clothes, particularly Western clothes, and sexual harassment came up more than once in my interviews. In Katy's case, she points out that dressing is associated with cultural norms and Anne points out that "wearing something a little different" or something that deviates from the norms places women at risk for harassment.

Katy: You can't defy certain norms of society like wear particular kind of clothes, or roam around like that or what time you roam around in the night also people also meddle about that, who you roam around with.

Anne: In day to day life, I think the fact that when you walk on the streets it is like there is a woman who is wearing something a little different or someone who is you know probably wearing something very revealing you have these men just staring. I think a lot of them just stare out of probably, I think that happens a lot everywhere

Like Katy and Anne, Amelia also pointed out links between dressing and street harassment. However, she goes on to further clarify the norms referred to in Katy and Anne's interviews.

Amelia: One of the reasons behind that is the modern dressing sense of the girls here. I wouldn't blame the girls because everyone has the right to look modern, everyone has the right to look beautiful but it is the stupid mentality of the people that makes them think in a different way and they want to get somewhere else out of that. So the dressing and the safety of women in India is a biggest problem that you can think.

So then these are the places and then comments on, like if you wear a dress [Inaudible 00:27:34] we have a, not exactly a slum area but then we have what you call it *Jhopatpatti*<sup>29</sup> there are. So when you come out on the road and you are wearing a dress you will really have people who are walking by whistling at you or they will pass some sarcastic comments... things like that. So

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<sup>29</sup> *Jhopadpatti* is usually used to refer to slums or settlements comprising huts.

yeah a lot of times and you just ignore it.

First, Amelia points out that modern dressing puts women at risk, and later she describes “dresses” as clothes that attract unwanted attention. In this way, she links Western attire with street harassment.

Given that most Indian-Catholic women reported their preference for Western clothing, it is plausible that they might experience higher levels of street harassment as their clothing marks them as Westernized and therefore, excessively modern (and hypersexual). However, given that only Catholic women were interviewed conclusions about cross-cultural comparisons are tenuous at best. Further, feminists have emphasized that the basic motivation for sexual violence is an assertion of power—it rarely has anything to do with what clothes were being worn or “sexiness”: Illahi’s (2010) work on Egyptian women in Cairo’s public spaces shows that both veiled and unveiled women experienced similar levels of street harassment. Thus, although popular narratives and women themselves implicate clothing as putting women at risk for sexual violence, this claim is not borne out in reality, as seen in the excerpt of Amanda’s interview.

Amanda: Sometimes I go to these areas because I have to get my material. They are mostly Muslim, male dominated areas and I have to take care of how I dress over there because if they look at you and sometimes even when I wear Indian clothes to go to these areas so that I think I can fit in with them they still look at me differently.

It is important to note that Amanda understood her preference for Western clothing as putting her at risk for street harassment and dressed in Indian clothes because she believed it would allow her to pass as insiders in a non-Catholic community and reduce her risk of harassment. Such responses can be read as an internalization of the

male gaze which results in self-objectification. Friedrickson & Roberts (1999) note that “a critical repercussion of being viewed by others in sexually objectifying ways is that, over time, individuals may be coaxed to internalize an observer’s perspective on self (p. 179). In Amanda’s case, such self-objectification is seen in how she polices her own dressing in order to fit in with a cultural ideal. Self-objectification then becomes one way in which women anticipate and prepare for (by changing their dressing for example) the male gaze that they have to endure on a regular basis (Bartkey, 1990).

### **Mobility in digital spaces: “It was a normal decent picture”**

Early feminist research on cyberspace emphasized the potential of cyberspace to disrupt gender and racial hierarchies, but these claims are now tempered by more recent research, which shows that cyberspace is not necessarily a feminist utopia (Gajjala, 2003). Rather, it can be a space where offline hierarchies are renewed. Cyberspace, with its emphasis on circulation and exchange of ideas was supposed to shift the attention from women’s bodies and provide them with a platform for voicing opinions (Nouraine-Simone, 2005). However, “the visual turn” of the Internet (Jay, 2002) has meant a renewed focus on women’s bodies even in cyberspace. Moreover, increasingly, women who express their opinions are often attacked and more often than not, cyberbullies threaten to harm their bodies (Sarkeesian, 2012). The instances of cyberviolence narrated by participants align with this view of cyberspace and illustrate how cyberspace is not an escape from bodies. Rather, bodies, and female bodies, in particular are further fetishized and violated in cyberspace. By narrating these instances of harassment online, I do not mean to imply that cyberspace is inherently a dangerous place for women. In



fact, participating in digital culture was an important part of maintaining relationships with peers. The Internet also provided access to contemporary Western media that were not easily available in India but preferred by participants. Finally, the Internet was extremely important for fulfilling educational and entrepreneurial goals. Thus, entering cyberspace was important and necessary for Indian-Catholic women. However, entering cyberspace also meant risking a violent encounter.

Reema refers to two instances where she felt unsafe online. In the first case, her photograph was shared without her permission and sexually suggestive comments were made about her body.

- Reema: ...there is this one guy who shares my pictures. It was a normal decent picture. Not even anything revealing and he shared it and said, "Nice legs". I blocked him. It felt very weird. Then someone messaged me like on the wall, you remember they had these confession groups
- Marissa: Yeah
- Reema: I don't know what are these people's issue is...somebody posted shit about me saying, "She was such a sweet girl and now she has turned into such a big slut." I don't even know who that is
- Marissa: And then what happened?
- Reema: Like even the fellow who I am dating he questioned who the administrator is and why didn't he remove the post and he can't post like that. it was weird. I don't even know

Similar to Reema, other participants reported instances wherein their photographs from Facebook were downloaded without their knowledge or comments were made about their bodies in the photographs. For these participants, the sexually suggestive comments mimicked sexual harassment in offline public spaces wherein their bodies are scrutinized, commented upon, and fetishized. The misuse of participants' photographs is particularly vexing since it was through the circulation of their

photographs in online spaces that these women celebrated their modern identities (Ch. III).

The other incident narrated by Reema refers to a Facebook group called “Orlem Confessions.” The group was relatively new at the time of my fieldwork and was often a place where youth from Orlem would post anonymously (via the administrator) about local secrets, crushes, etc. It was a space to build community among the youth and boost the popularity of those who received compliments. However, for Reema, the group became another space where her sexuality was made the focus and derided.

### *Technologies of safety: mobile phones*

Achieving modernity for Indian women involves managing risk to their bodies, a risk that they navigate through communication technologies and other non-technology-related strategies. Mobile phones, in particular, were often identified as a “tool for security” (Campbell, 2006).

- Blossom: I don't call my friends, my mom however is very worried so the moment I reach a particular bus stop I have to call her and inform her that I'm here.
- Priyanka: After 9 o'clock I am usually with friends so they will put me in a rickshaw and we will always message each other when we reach home and all. So we do that and plus sort of in the rickshaw I always have my phone in front of me so in case anything happens that the rickshaw guy knows that.

Both Blossom and Priyanka use their mobile phones when they are out side the home to inform parents or friends about their whereabouts. Other participants reported taking similar measures to stay safe. In Priyanka's case, her parents bought her the phone specifically to keep a tab on her whereabouts once she began junior college,

ostensibly to ensure her safety. The move from high school to college is marked with a number of changes for most Indian women. Until high school, most Indian women and Indian-Catholic women in particular go to convent schools, close to their homes, where their actions are closely monitored by school authorities.

Starting college, however, typically means moving to a co-ed environment and attending classes that are not in the same zip code as their homes. It also means flexible schedules and reduced monitoring of attendance. “Bunking” or cutting classes becomes increasingly common as students use the time to socialize with friends by hanging out on college campuses, going for movie or shopping expeditions, etc. In such situations, the mobile phone becomes a useful way for parents to monitor their children’s whereabouts, a practice that has led to the mobile phones being called a “digital leash.” (Ling 1999 quoted in Nafus and Tracey, 2002, p. 212)

Priyanka’s parents bought her a mobile phone once she started going to college. Priyanka explained that she once stayed over at a friend’s place way past her curfew. Since her parents did not know the friend, they had no way to contact her. The next day, she was sent with her brother to buy a mobile phone. Priyanka’s narrative illustrates Lobet-Maris’ (2003) finding that ‘the mobile phone apparently is first acquired with parental approval, as an additional security measure to guarantee the sort of protected autonomy parents desire for their daughters’ (p. 88). In Priyanka’s case, the mobile phone allowed her parents to constantly be in touch with her, reducing their worry about her safety while she was outside the home. For Priyanka, the mobile phone has increased her mobility. By using the phone as a way of maintaining contact with friends while she

is traveling in public transport, Priyanka could assume responsibility for her safety without having to compromise her mobility at night.

Priyanka's story illustrates that mobile phones increased mobility for my participants primarily by allowing for increased surveillance. Although mobility and surveillance are typically understood as antithetical concepts, in the case of young women increased surveillance through the mobile phone allows for increased mobility (Campbell, 2006). The mobile phone "as a tool of security, therefore assists the girls in entering the public world, a world that is constructed as unsafe" (Campbell, 2006). In this way, by helping women maintain their mobility, mobile phones help them achieve modernity, making mobile phones not just symbols of affluence or digital connectedness but a tool for achieving modernity. However, mobile phones increase mobility not just by allowing for increased surveillance. For example, Anne and Zara both use their phones to keep in touch with friends and family while traveling.

- Anne: I message a lot so maybe in the rickshaw whenever I am sitting I am always messaging ...
- Marissa: Does having a mobile phone makes you feel safer?
- Anne: Yes, maybe. You know because if there is some kind of incident happening and if you have it in your hand you still can you know try calling up someone and let them at least know that you are there and can come there immediately
- Zara: Call my parents and tell them that I am in a rickshaw. I make sure that the rickshaw fellow has heard that I am telling this.

As the excerpts above indicate, participants felt that the mobile phones helped deter violence. That is, many times mobile phones are used as a preemptive measure against potential violence. For Priyanka and Anne, holding the phone afforded them

protection against potential threats, while for Zara, using the phone to let the rickshaw driver know that she is under surveillance afforded her protection. These findings correspond with Foley, Holzman, and Wearing's (2007) findings that mobile phones offered protection by allowing women to be seen as not alone. For Cheryl, talking using her mobile phone allowed her to indirectly communicate to the rickshaw driver that she was self-aware.

- Cheryl: I think Bombay is pretty safe. I have travelled alone by 12 o'clock and all.
- Marissa: And you are fine with that?
- Cheryl: Yeah but I do talk on the phone with my mom or with my boyfriend. I have to talk to someone
- Marissa: Why do you do that?
- Cheryl: Just to be safe, to know that I am not some ass or I am drunk or something I am on the phone.

In both Zara and Cheryl's case, we see that the purpose of being on the mobile phone is not necessarily to communicate with people they are talking to, but it acts as way of indirectly communicating with the rickshaw driver. Their actions warn the driver against violence without explicitly broaching the topic.

For Sonia, the mobile phone allowed her to be prepared. That is, she did not just use the phone as a deterrent against potential violence, but the mobile phone was an active part of her strategy against violence, should it occur.

- Sonia: But when I go by rickshaw I tend to feel a little insecure so I tend to call up someone and talk to them while on the way in the rickshaw to make sure and safe so the person knows that if he tries anything fishy on the way I have someone on the line who I can talk to immediately and give out a number that he can refer to or get where I am.

In contrast, for Florence, the mobile phone was part of a coping strategy against

on-going violence.

Florence: Brother James. He was the one who messaged me and he used to ask me whether I had any troubles and all. If I tell him he used to give me suggestions you know what to do and what not to do and all.

The messages Florence would receive from Brother James during the day provided her with tangible strategies she could take to reduce the sexual harassment, while also allowing her a space to vent and ask for advice. Thus, the mobile phone allowed her to connect resources that provide emotional and information support.

The use of mobile phones for security purposes also points to the classed nature of Indian modernity. Like the majority of Indian women, the participants in this study were also at risk for gender violence when mobile. However, their middle-class status meant that they had access to certain strategies—particularly technology-based strategies that might be too expensive for women of low socio-economic status. Even though mobile phones have become affordable, smartphones are still not widely owned by those of low socio-economic status and consequently advanced features such as GPS services and mobile apps for safety might not benefit poor women. Calling and messaging can also become expensive, and in such cases, particularly among those of lower SES, missed calls and dropped calls act as signals for calling back, indicating a person has reached a particular location (Stenson & Donner, 2009).

The potential of mobile phones for safety has not gone unnoticed by either the Indian government or technology companies. Although the mobile phone practices described above have been used by women to manage risk in public spaces since a long

time, gender violence in urban contexts has become a topic of open discussion only recently, following Jyoti Singh Pandey's brutal rape in December 2012. In the next section, I focus on the communication technologies being designed specifically for the women's safety.

*Technological solutions: magic bullets*

Ever since the safety of women in public spaces has become a topic of national discussion, there has been an uptick in solutions to keep women safe while on the move. In particular, technological solutions have been advocated, a trend that is not surprising given the close ties between narratives of empowerment and technology (Huyer & Sikosa, 2003)<sup>30</sup>. In urban India, there has been a marked shift in discussions about women and mobile phones. Prior to 2012, mobile phones were mainly viewed as functional fashion accessories for women. The launch of the Micromax Bling mobile phone (Figure 5) and Samsung Diva (Figure 6) mobile phone stand out in this regard. Rather than emphasizing functionality, Micromax's advertising campaign focused on how the mobile phone was small enough to fit into women's clutches and purses and the embellishment with Swarovski crystals increased its aesthetic appeal for women. The setting shown in the commercial for the phone is tellingly a fashion show, where the phone steals the spotlight from female models walking the ramp. In this way, the mobile phone is presented as the ultimate fashion statement. The Samsung Diva similarly

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<sup>30</sup> In January 2014, the Indian Ordnance Factory launched Nirbheek, marketed as India's first firearm designed specifically for women (translation: it is light and compact) and as a tribute to "Nirbhaya" Jyoti Singh Pandey.

emphasizes its potential as a fashion accessory by focusing on its small size and a central button that gleams and glitters. It also included preloaded apps targeting female consumers, such as a wish list, pricing and shopping big app, and a fake call app that allows users to set up fake calls to themselves.

In contrast, the recently launched iBall Andi Udaan (*udaan* means “flight in Hindi”) (Figure 7) was marketed as a fashionable, safety accessory for Indian women. The Android device is marketed to women with the slogan “fly without fear,” A slogan that interestingly acknowledges that flight or mobility usually involves fear. In addition to a Swarovski zirconia crystal-encrusted body, the device has special safety features: a heart-shaped SOS button that triggers a loud alarm when pressed, ability to send text messages that include geographical information to five pre-determined contacts; and a pre-installed application called ‘In case of emergency’ (ICE) which users to enter information such as blood type, medical history, and emergency contacts. It also includes a GPS tracking system that can be used by 10 people to keep track of the phone owner’s movements. The phone comes with pink covers and a pink pouch for storing the phone and headphones.

In addition to technologies, women-only technology spaces have also started to make an appearance. For example, Vodafone recently launched 16 Angel stores. These are stores wholly managed and run by women employees. Explaining the rationale behind these stores, Marten Pieters, Managing Director and CEO of Vodafone India stated: “The Angel Stores are a part of Vodafone's commitment to provide our women



employees with one of the most secure and productive work environment. Additionally, our women customers feel more welcomed while visiting the store.”

Leslie Shade (2007) has explored the feminizing of mobile phone design in North America using the concept of gender script, first used by Van Oost (2003) to explain how designers incorporate their ideas about gender identity and /or gender relations into the design of shavers . Analyzing the design of Andi Udaan to uncover the gender scripts built into the design is useful for exploring expectations regarding how the modern Indian women should keep herself safe while on the go.

The name of the phone itself—*udaan* or flight—emphasizes mobility, and the slogan, “fly without fear,” both acknowledges women’s fears regarding their safety while mobile and presents Andi Udaan as the solution to security risks. By providing pink accessories for the mobile phone and continuing the trend of incorporating crystals into the body of the phone, Andi Udan firmly identifies its users are fashion-conscious women. The use of pink and bling as markers of femininity aligns with the marketing of well-known women-focused brands such as Victoria’s Secret and Juicy Couture, and a host of other fashion products for women ranging from shoes to bags to watches.

The suturing of female gender with risk is best seen through the incorporation of a heart-shaped SOS button: the heart shape, often used as the symbol for romance and love, both feminized emotions (Cancian & Gordon, 1988), is inscribed with SOS, the Morse code distress signal. In this way, risk gets constituted as an essential feature of being female. The incorporation of safety features into a fashionable mobile device acknowledges that fashionable woman are at risk, and a closer analysis of the safety

features sheds light onto what are considered useful strategies for managing risk. The SOS button when pressed acts a loud alarm, similar to a rape whistle. Pressing it would draw attention to a safety threat and marks an interesting departure from popular discourse that seeks to normalize harassment of women in public spaces. However, whether technological alarms draw more attention to violence than women's voices remains to be seen. By allowing women to openly identify attackers, these features contribute to a growing social movement that advocates breaking the silence around sexual harassment. The modern Indian woman is thus scripted as someone who does not endure abuse silently.

The inclusion of a GPS tracking system increases surveillance of women who are mobile. By encouraging women to make known their location constantly to others in their social or family networks, privacy is becomes a luxury. In this way, modern Indian woman are expected to pay for their mobility by giving up privacy and accepting increased surveillance. Mobile phones, although used for surveillance, can also be used to give *the illusion of surveillance*. For example, Katy would regularly stay in contact with her parents through her mobile phone but also lie about her whereabouts, affording her a sense of independence and freedom from supervision while calming her parent's fears about her safety. With GPS devices being seen as essential to safety, however, such opportunities of freedom afforded by mobile phones get eliminated. Further, by connecting women in danger to members in their personal networks rather than the police, modern women are also seen as those who have strong community ties—people who care about their safety. Such features not only absolve government of its

responsibility for protecting its citizens but also places the burden for developing and maintaining a safety network on women. Thus, modern Indian women are supposed to be in charge of their own safety, and the best way to ensure independence (to be mobile) is to depend on strong, personal relationships.

### **Privacy technologies, private practices**

Similar to mobility and safety, privacy was also a privilege for most of my participants. While the proliferation of technologies in Western homes has resulted in “bedroom culture” (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001) among First World youth, for young middle-class Indians, like my participants, private spaces such as bedrooms were rare. Most did not have their own rooms and those who did rarely had personal TVs or computers in their rooms. Barring two participants, all others lived in nuclear families, which is a departure from the traditional joint family system of housing and is seen as symbolic of modern urban life (Sinha, 1990). However, this shift did not result in increased privacy for individual members of the family, although it might have increased autonomy for the family unit.

As is common among young Indians, these women lived at home with their families. However, none of my participants reported a need for personal space in the household. In fact, the home was seen as a space where family members interacted with each other and avoidance was considered rude. Sonia, a 25-year-old woman working in a call center, makes this point as follows.

Sonia: I don't really hang out in my room that much. I spend most of my time in the living room because I believe in spending time at home with my mother. So if I'm at home I'm usually in my living

room. The only time I'm in my room is when I'm getting changed to get out or if I'm going to sleep in the night, that's my private time that I get to myself really.

Sonia's assertion that she "believes" in spending time at home with her mother indicates that maintaining close ties with family members is part of the value system. This emphasis placed on family relationships is also seen in terms of technology use in the home.

Although most spaces and technologies in the home were considered communal (for example, siblings often shared laptops with each other and most homes had only one TV that was used by all members), the mobile phone was unique in this regard: The mobile phone was not only a private technology (since it was only handled by trusted persons, usually peers, and rarely by authority figures such as parents), but also the only technology (issues complicating ownership notwithstanding<sup>31</sup>) that allowed participants to access privacy (in virtual spaces) despite being located in overcrowded homes. These mobile phones are not like other technologies used by these women, such as the television, digital camera, or computer, all of which are considered and used as "family" rather than "personal" possessions. The content on their phones was, similarly, considered private and was not easily shown to or shared with strangers.

In this section, I explore how privacy is enacted through mobile phone practices. Specifically, I explore practices related to surveillance and sharing, which confirm the status of the mobile phone as a private technology. Next, I explore the role of messaging

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<sup>31</sup> A number of participants had received the phone as a gift from parents or boyfriends. Further, in many cases, mobile phone bills were paid by parents, with costs ranging from INR 200-1000 per month. (USD 3-17)

in the maintenance of social and romantic relationships. Participants' expectations and enactments of privacy show how Catholic norms regarding sexual abstinence and Indian society's norms regarding sexual restraint for women overlap to create a need for privacy that participants' did not seem to find necessary in other contexts. Autonomy and freedom are normative elements of Western modernity. Within this conceptualization, private spaces where the individual is the focus are seen as both important and necessary. For Indian women, however, modernity does not necessarily include a similar emphasis or anxiety regarding privacy, except in matters pertaining to romance and sexuality. In this way, while collectivism, in the form of sharing limited resources such as technology, is a part of Indian modernity, it is also gendered in that sexuality is considered a private matter for women in particular.

### *Surveillance and sharing*

Studying how mobile phones are used in the family context provides an insight into how family relationships are maintained, negotiated, or transformed. Within families, it was quite common for each family member to each have their own phones. This ownership structure eliminated the need for sharing of mobile phones unless it was for specific purposes such as using a camera that had better resolution or making expensive international calls using parents' phones.

However, unlike other media and technologies whose use is often monitored, parents did not usually investigate mobile phones or the content on them. For example, one participant narrated incidents where she might be asked to switch channels if her mother entered the room and found the program being watched offensive. Another

participant, Monica, described that her television watching was often monitored and if her other saw her watching something she considered inappropriate, it could mean a long “lecture” about her poor choices. Mobile phone content, in contrast, was not subject to such scrutiny. I observed that participants’ would routinely leave their phones charging in outlets in the living room or family bedroom, unconcerned about privacy.

A similar lack of parental surveillance existed regarding media consumption on desktop computers and laptops, possibly indicating that parents’ lack of ability to competently navigate new media technologies was being leveraged by participants’ to keep the content on their phones private. However, given that messaging, phone calls, and pictures were the main uses of the phone for participants’, and these uses mirrored the ways in which parents used their own smartphones, the reason for parents not looking through the content on participants’ mobile phones deserves closer examination and should not be reduced to a lack of technological competence. An alternative reason for this lack of surveillance of content on mobile phones might be found in how participants discussed the issue. Consider Tania’s case. In the excerpt below, she outline explicitly the ways in which her mother goes to show her that Tania’s phone is her personal technology and that she respects Tania’s need for privacy in this regard.

Tania:            They have never touched my cell phone. From the time I have had one they have never touched it...even if they see our phone and if it is ringing they say, “Oh, Tania your phone is ringing and so and so is calling.” If I say, “Mom, you can pick it up.” Then she does. Even if she wants to make a phone call she will never pick up my phone and say, “Oh, I am just making a phone call.” She tells me, “I need to make a phone call.”

In Tania's case, her mother shows that she would never examine her mobile phone and allowed her complete privacy with regard to mobile phone interactions. However, a week later, Tania's mother refused her permission to go visit her cousin stating that she thought Tania should not exert herself in the heat because she looked ill—even though later in the day, she asked Tania to babysit some younger cousins. The incident led to a fight between Tania and her mother, during which it became clear that Tania's mother would refuse permission for visits to friends and family arbitrarily, and as a result, Tania felt that she could never make plans independently. Tania's mother also regularly criticized her weight, asking her to control her diet. When Tania, who loves to experiment in the kitchen wanted to make a cheese-based dish, her mother would not let her. She would also insist Tania exercise and taunt her regarding her fluctuating weight, a result of a hormonal imbalance.

Thus, while Tania's mobile phone content might not be monitored, her mobility and lifestyle habits were certainly under extreme scrutiny. However, by treating Tania's phone as a private technology, Tania's mother was able to show that she still respected her daughter's privacy and need for independence. Therefore, it might be that by not examining mobile phones, parents are able to communicate to participants' that they are trusted, even if the extreme parental supervision exists in other areas of their lives. A similar lack of parental intrusion in mobile phone interactions was also reported by other participants. Chriselle's point that she thinks she is "thankful" that her parents don't examine her phone suggests that the privacy afforded for mobile phone interactions is not the norm for all interactions. In Reema's case, she points out that parents are not the

only people from whom mobile phone interactions might need to be kept private.

Siblings might also intrude on privacy, but even siblings respect her privacy when it comes her mobile phone.

Chriselle: I am lucky or I should say thankful to my parents that they never check my phone

Marissa: They never check your phone?

Chriselle: Never

Reema: But nothing. My parents don't touch my phone

Marissa: They don't?

Reema: Even my brothers won't touch. They have their own things

In the case of Lisa and Lavina, they refused to keep passwords for their phone, secure in the knowledge that parents would not examine their mobile phones.

Marissa: What about your phone? Does your phone have a pass code or anything?

Lisa: No, it doesn't.

Marissa: So you are not concerned about your mom checking your phone?

Lavina: No, because they don't really check my phone. So it is okay.

However, even though parents would not typically inspect mobile phones, some participants used precautions in the event that parents decided they wanted to examine the phone. Reema, for example, would never leave the phone out of her sight.

Reema: And nobody gets my phone. It is always with me. Nobody gets it. When I am sleeping it is on my bed, under my pillow. When I am in the hall it is with me. Nobody can touch it.

Marissa: So you don't just leave it around?

Reema: No

Marissa: What do you do when you go to the bathroom?

Reema: I take it with me

Marissa: Oh, really?

Reema: Yes [Laughter]



Passwords were also another commonly used to protect content on the phone. These strategies for ensuring that content on the phone remained private highlights that participants valued their privacy and shows that some were willing to take even measures to protect it. However, as Nina's discussion about her mobile phone password reveals, passwords can be used strategically to lock out unwanted surveillance but allow trusted persons access to the phone

Nina: Yeah, I have just to keep things private...everyone knows my password except my parents because my parents wouldn't be cool with how I am talking to someone or my boyfriend or with the pictures. They don't know I have gone to so and so place. Suddenly they may scroll through my pictures and it is all ready to go. So everyone knows my password, except my parents.

Similar to Nina, a few other participants also reported that sharing the phone was common among peers so that they could see pictures within peer groups is not a new observation, typically sharing has been reported to occur for functional purposes. However, in the case of my participants, sharing the phone was an indicator of trust and going through information on the phone for which friends did not have explicit permission was seen as breaking trust. Tania's interactions with a former roommate clearly illustrate this point.

Tania: It happened to me once. Like a friend of mine went through. She was my roommate and we were friends and she went through my phone. She was reading messages that XXX sent to me and our conversations. So I was very pissed off. I didn't look at her face for quite some time and then she begged for forgiveness. I may have forgiven her but I was not completely cool with leaving my phone anywhere in her vicinity after that. I was quite careful. She asked me about pictures. I said, "Oh yeah, that is fine." I had gone for a bath and that is when she went through my messages and whatever and she happened to tell me. I was so pissed off. I told

her, “Even if I was talking about you, you don’t have any right to go through my messages.”... It is one of my personal, it is like my belonging. It is as good as someone opening like a diary and reading it. I consider my phone equivalent to my diary.

Tania’s interactions with her roommate after her roommate checked the message on I without her permission reveal just how much of a premium is placed on keeping mobile phone interactions private. However, this need for privacy has to be balanced with politeness. Initially, Tania allowed her roommate to look through the picture son her phone, a practice that I observed among other participants also. However, access to one part of the phone did not imply access to all the content on the phone. Participants expected their peers to be aware of these norms.

Tania considered her mobile phone as private as her diary, but Katy used the phone as her diary. For this purpose, she used the note-taking feature on her phone, which she said is rarely used. Although she would hand over her phone to peers and best friends in particular, she still considered the notes on her phone secure.

- Katy: The one thing they won’t do is check the notes. So, yeah. No one in the right frame of mind uses the notes, so they don’t check them. That is the one thing they don’t do. I give them the perception, “Who writes a diary?”
- Marissa: So that is how you keep it private even from your best friends?
- Katy: Oh, yeah of course. And I make sure they have the perception of “Who writes a diary?” and so they think I don’t write a diary. That is the one thing that they are not looking for...it is just the whole idea that no one writes a diary or I won’t write a diary so they are not searching for that in the phone. It is like you plant an idea in someone’s mind

In Katy’s case, simply refusing to give the phone to peers is seen as rude or impolite, an action that might call the closeness of the friendship into question because

privacy is equated with being secretive, as is common in societies where collectivistic attitudes regarding ownership are common (Walton et al., 2012). Consequently, additional steps need to be taken in order to protect private information from such friends. Passwords were also useful for protecting content on the phone from siblings and young children. It was not uncommon for very young children to use the phone as a toy and increasingly, phones are used to entertain children. However these situations also creates privacy concerns.

Sonia: Yes. I will lock because I have certain pictures and friends send some certain videos, which probably are not good enough for those who are below age. And my boyfriend's sister is below age and she has the habit of going through the phone whenever I'm there because she likes playing on my phone. So I have to lock certain information and keep away from her. That's the reason I have these locks.

From Katy and Sonia's explanations, it is clear that although participants considered the phone a private technology, there was also some expectation to share the device among peers. In Sonia's case, passwords protected young children from accessing sexually explicit content, which is often shared among peers.

These "secret" tactics to maintain privacy mirror findings by Smyth et al. (2010) and Walton et al. (2012), who reported similar tactics were used by their participants who were expected to share their mobile phones with peers and young children. Mobile phones were the also primary means for sharing music, a practice that often occurred quickly through Bluetooth pairing or even listening to music on a single mobile with friends by sharing earphones. Thus, sharing involved both sharing of the technology and media content. Walton et al. (2012) explain that the sharing of mobile phones suggest

that “to some extent, collectivist values are in conflict with Western notions of the ‘private’ and autonomous individual, whose personal integrity and information are be protected from intrusion or surveillance, whether by the state or corporations. (p. 409). For my participants, being modern youth did not preclude collectivistic cultural expectations such as sharing of private belongings.

The surveillance and sharing practices of these young women, thus, show that in globalizing India, mobile phone privacy practices are a useful focus for studying tensions between collectivism and individualism as evidenced by the futility of categorizing the mobile phone as a wholly private or wholly public technology. So far, I have discussed how surveillance and sharing of content are negotiated. However, practices related to mobile phone use also have implications for privacy.

### *Texting*

The centrality of texting to mobile phone communication is evidenced by the popularity of the instant messaging application, Whatsapp. In addition to one-on-one conversations, Whatsapp allows users to create groups and include a display picture, status message, and time of last log in. Consequently, if privacy is viewed as limiting availability, then Whatsapp is not the best way to maintain privacy because it can be easily used to determine availability.

For most participants, Whatsapp was the first choice to communicate with friends and co-workers. Communicating with parents typically involved phone calls, but phone calls were rarely used to communicate with peers. It was not uncommon to find participants engrossed in texting at all hours of the day—a practice that sometimes

frustrated their parents. However, as boyd (2014) points out, “most teens are not compelled by gadgetry as such— they are compelled by friendship” (p.18). Young adults, it seems, are similar to teens in this regard. Not answering messages could be perceived as rude, particularly in the case of Whatsapp, which makes it easy for the person sending the message to determine if the phone to which a message is being sent is in use. Thus, responding in a timely fashion is an important friendship maintenance strategy.

However, participants did feel the pressure of always being connected and tried to disconnect from friends when they felt the need for “alone time.” It is telling that a few participants reported switching their phones to airplane mode rather than switching off their phones when they wanted to be alone. When phones are in airplane mode, the phone’s signal transmission is suspended. In practical terms, this means that the phone cannot be used to message, make or receive calls, or use the Internet. That is, all social capabilities of the phone are suspended. However, the phone can still be used for functions that are not transmission-related such as listening to music on the mp3 player, taking photos, etc. Katy as one of the participants who disclosed putting her phone in “airplane mode.”

Katy: When I don’t want anyone to disturb me or I am sad. Mostly when I am sad then I don’t want to talk to anyone so I switch it off

Marissa: When was the last time you switched of your phone?

Katy: Technically I don’t switch, switch it off. I put it on flight mode so that becomes the same thing. But I get to use the music. So yeah when I am frustrated when something goes wrong especially with work or something like that

Putting the phone in airplane mode rather than switching it off completely suggests that for Katy, being connected to her friends is the norm and being disconnected is a deviation. Further, by equating flight mode to switching off the phone, Katy seems to be implying that the primary purpose of the phone is to remain connected with her social network.

Further, texting rather than calling was more common. Using texting rather than phone calls to communicate with peers is a practice that has been noted by other researchers who have studied a variety of youth populations. In her recent study on the social networks of American teenagers, boyd (2014) points out that American teens prefer texting because parents cannot eavesdrop on conversation, which is a risk with phone calls. Itō & Okabe (2005) note that texting allows Japanese girls to maintain cultural norms of silence in intimate settings such as in the home but still maintains social connections. Grinter & Eldridge's (2001) study of text messaging among British teenagers pointed out that text messaging is used because it quick, convenient, and discreet. In the case of my participants, text messaging allowed them to engage in conversations privately while still within family settings. As mentioned earlier, private spaces within the home were hard to come by given that multiple people often slept in the same bedroom and most participants lived with their parents. Further, the landline was usually placed in the living room, a space where there is no expectation of privacy. Texting offered an alternative in this regard for discussing potentially sensitive information. Anjali confirmed that texting is used to communicate sensitive information among friends by revealing that a few chats on her phone are password-protected.

Anjali: They are basically my best friends chats where you know sometimes the things that I have to keep confidential is not about my life but about her life

Another result of this lack of parental surveillance of mobile phone interactions meant that any activities that might not receive parental approval were carried out using the phone. Most often, it was romantic relationships that were managed using the mobile phone.

### *Modern romance*

As research shows, mobile phones along with other new media are often used by youth to maintain romantic relationships (Pascoe, 2011). Text messages sent via the mobile phone have been found to be important for romantic negotiations among Norwegian youth (Prøitz, 2005). In a study conducted among youth in the United Kingdom, Henderson et al. (2002) found that texting through mobile phones allowed youth to have some privacy and engage in flirtations as well as find potential partners.

In societies, where romantic relationships between unmarried youth are discouraged or considered transgressive, the mobile phone is increasingly used to subvert such norms. The mobile phone is part of such subversion in the lives of Palestinian women, who used mobile phones given to them by their boyfriends to maintain their relationships even while keeping these relationships secret (Hijazi-Omari & Ribak, 2008). Doron & Jeffery (2013) found that among semi-literate poor, young people in India, calls made by the mobile phone allowed for the subversion of cultural norms. For example, he discusses the use of the mobile phone by one participant who

had two mobile phones: one for business and one for romance. The participant used the one for romance to communicate with his fiancé who lived in another city and subvert arrange marriage norms in his community that allowed him to meet his fiancé face-to-face only a few times before marriage. In contrast, Wallis (2013) found that among Chinese migrant workers, the mobile phone was important for enhancing romantic lives by allowing for the maintenance of long-distance relationships but as in traditional dating rituals, the use of technology did not preclude the involvement of an intermediary in the romantic relationship. Thus, she concludes that “dating practices that have emerged via the phone blend both the traditional and technological, while challenging established norms and patterns” (p. 117). Mobile phone practices featured prominently in the romantic lives of my participants also.

Wake up in the morning. Check phone for messages. Send a “good morning message” to the boyfriend. Continue messaging each other throughout the day. End the day by sending a “good night” message. This pattern was part of the daily routine for most of my participants who had boyfriends, and is similar to the use of mobile phones reported by others for “keeping in touch” and maintaining relationships. However, very often romantic relationships with boys were not known to parents, and as a result, mobile phones, given their status as a semi-private technology, became an important medium for maintaining romantic relationships and moving them forward. However, before describing practices used to maintain romantic relationships, it is important to contextualize attitudes toward and expectations regarding romantic relationships.



Romantic relationships was an area where Catholic women felt that their Catholic culture allowed them more freedom as compared with cultures of other religions. For example, they often mentioned freedom to choose partners, caveats regarding heterosexuality and religious congruence notwithstanding, as a mark of Catholic culture being more modern than cultures of other religions.

Tania: Like arranged marriages is the thing of India. But it is not like that in the catholic culture. Like at least my parents and my family as I look at they are open to love marriage. They allow you to choose who you want. They even ask you, “Do you have someone or should I start looking?” So I think that is a little Western...I think Catholic faith gives you a little more than other faiths. You are given your freedom of choice here. Like a lot of times we are allowed to decide when we want to get married. Like my wouldn't pressurize me when I am 23 to get married. She may say that by 27-26 I think you should be settled with who you really want to get married to and stuff like that. but in other cultures they ask the girl to get married once she is 21 or once she is 22. They push her to get married. I mean the girl doesn't really have a say in it which is wrong. That doesn't really happen in catholic culture.

From this quote, it is clear that Tania views Catholic culture as giving her more freedom regarding choice of partner and when to get married. Further, she sees these as a mark of being Western and by condemning lack of choice or non-Catholic women, she positions Catholic culture as superior in this regard. For Tania, being Western is seen as being more progressive and Indian traditions regarding marriage are framed as backward.

Anne: I don't know what to say but I think Muslim community is very, you know some times they are very biased towards men compared to women. There is not much of gender equality as such.

Marissa: Why do you say that?

Anne: Because a lot of them are restricted, and in their environment a lot of women are forced to get married earlier even before they finish off their degree or in the senior year

of school. Especially the burqa, I don't think women should be forced to wear that. It should be her choice. If she wants to wear it, it is absolutely her choice.

Anne also positions Catholic culture as better than Islam in terms of attitudes towards marriage and education, which she sees as interrelated. Priyanka makes a similar connection.

- Priyanka: I think Catholics are better off because that way girls are more educated. So there is more freedom that way. Actually I have a friend same age as me. So we both gave the CFA exams. So right now for her, her problem and we actually both failed. So her problem is marriage
- Marissa: What do you mean?
- Priyanka: Like arranging her marriage and all
- Marissa: What community does she belong to?
- Priyanka: I believe she is Gujarati, so I was like that for me is much later because
- Marissa: No pressure about that at home?
- Priyanka: No, because right now it is all for R (brother) and all because he is older than me. Plus I already told my mom, "You set the benchmark. You only got married at 29." So my mom was, "I will search for you at 26 so by the time we get a boy it will be 29." Actually among my cousins and all they all married after, in early 30s maybe. So some are still not married

A close reading of the interview excerpt above reveals Indian and Catholic cultures are not radically different: Even among Catholics, arranged marriages<sup>32</sup> seem relatively

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<sup>32</sup> In India and some other Asian countries, parents or other authority figures select a suitable match for youth to marry. A marriage resulting from such match-making is termed an "arranged marriage." In contrast, "love marriages" refer to marriages wherein youth chose their partners without the intervention of authority figures and might receive some resistance from authority figures. Finally, "arranged love marriages" refer to love marriages that have the blessings of authority figures.

common—the difference seems to be that arranged marriages are not the first choice. However, they are an acceptable alternative if a “love marriage” is not on the cards.

Further, even among Catholics, for women, marriage becomes important for women before they are 30 years old. Notably, all three participants speak about parents when discussing marriage, indicating that parents have a high level of involvement in marriage-related decisions, particularly in deciding the appropriate age for marriage.

- Anne: My mother keeps saying that at least by 28 you should get married
- Marissa: So how do you think that will fit into your plans, your PhD and all?
- Anne: No, I don't know actually my counselor keeps telling me that people get married in between a PhD
- Marissa: So what about, so you discuss this with your counselor?
- Anne: No, actually my mom was very, she was just asking her the time period of it. And the counselor who is a woman she said...The one who is doing my process for the PhD. So she was the one who my mom was speaking to. It was our first meeting. So we were asking her the time period, as in how long will it be? Then my mom said, calculating that it will be 28 or something. That is how she said that was her concern and that I can immediately get married.

The involvement of parents in matters related to marriage further complicates the idea that Catholic cultural attitudes are radically different from non-Catholic Indian attitudes. As the quotes above demonstrate that attitudes toward marriage are very much in line with the expectations regarding marriage in modern Indian society. In line with the conceptualization of modern Indian woman, my participants were expected to be well-educated and have a say in their marriages. However, if needed, parents would step in and their involvement was seen as non-intrusive and expected after a certain age.

However, although participants said that they could choose their partners, casual dating was frowned upon. What this meant in practical terms was that most participants did not inform parent about romantic relationships until they were absolutely sure that the relationship was serious and headed towards marriage. Further, women who had had multiple boyfriends were termed “boy-crazy” or “slutty” Reema hinted at these attitudes by saying, “Girls are not supposed to drink, girls are not supposed to be speaking with boys and stuff like that because people just start talking about their mentality.” Reema herself had faced these attitudes when she was 15 years old and rumors began to spread in her peer group that she had had sex with her boyfriend at the time. In many ways, she was still not seen as a “good Catholic girl” For example, when I was recruiting participants, some who had participated in the interview said that I should interview Reema because she could give me all the “juicy stuff” since she was “experienced”(Refer also the instance of cyberbullying discussed on p. 155 of this document). Gossiping about young women’s relationships was common not only among peers but also among older women. Tania referred to such gossip in her interview: “So I have heard from aunties<sup>33</sup> like whenever they have a sector activity or they have a mass or whatever. After mass they socialize over there and that is where the gossip starts. They see someone with someone or they see someone wearing something or they see someone talking to someone or see someone talking to the priest and then they makeup stories. So yeah it stems from there.” The prevalence of gossiping coupled with pressure

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<sup>33</sup> In Mumbai, “Aunty” and “Uncle” are not used to exclusively refer to family members. Instead they are generic terms for older men and women and considered more respectful than using the person’s last name.

to refrain from any sexual activity meant that romantic relationships often had to be conducted in secret. Further, if other authority figures knew about young women engaging in sex, there was the risk that they would report it to the women's parents. Nina narrated one such incident during her interview.

Nina: But you just can't go to someone's house and say your girl is doing something wrong or she is. There is something that happened when I was small there was a girl. I guess she had sex with some guy and her best friend complained to the priest. The priest called her parents home, means he went to their home and he asked her parents to take care of her but I feel he shouldn't have done that. If she has control over her life I don't think he has any right to poke his nose.

Although many participants felt that young people should be free to decide when they want to have sex, in many cases, Catholic cultural attitudes toward abstinence were internalized.

Nina: I wouldn't want to do it with any random guy. By the way girls portray it nowadays that they just do it for fun but I would want to do it with a person who I know even if I am going to do it before the marriage it is okay if I know I am going to be with that man. So I would do it with him. I wouldn't mind to do it before my marriage if I know I am going to be with him and I know that he will be true to me then I will do it.

In a similar manner, Samantha, Tania, and Charmaine emphasize that sex is something in which that would engage only with their husband.

Samantha: For me I would prefer it, ideally not to have pre marital sex. But I know of a lot of people who have and you know, it's I guess your own personal view on that case. So there are a lot of people who know each other for like a long time so I guess its okay for them. But for me personally I wouldn't want to really, down the line maybe if I meet someone I don't know if I'll change my opinion then. But as of now I don't think so, I would like to wait at least till I was married.

Tania: I would want to be a virgin. Like I would not want to have sex before marriage mainly because this is what my religion demands of me and it is a personal choice. Like I know of a lot of friends who are not virgins before they are married and they have been changing boyfriends. But that is their thing. I mean I am not being judgmental. You want you can do it. I don't judge you but I wouldn't.

Cheryl: My boyfriend is not a virgin. I know his past girlfriends. He is older than me. So I told him from the get go that no way. I said it is nothing to do with a trust issue or anything but this is how I am and he totally, he understood. He thought I was worth it I guess **[Laughter]** so for 6 years, we have been going out for 6 years and next year we are getting married. So nothing.

These women's cautious attitudes toward sex should be understood as rooted in Indian and Catholic cultural values of sexual abstinence before marriage, particularly for women. Although Cheryl has been in a long and stable relationship, she is wary of entering into a sexual relationship. From Cheryl's quote it is clear that for women, their worth is often tied to their status as virgins. That is, "a woman's worth lies in her ability—or her refusal—to be sexual." (Valenti, 2009, p. 10) However, men are not held to such standards of purity. Thus, the emphasis on female purity exemplifies "gender asymmetric heterosexuality: male sexuality as aggressive and uncontrollable and female sexuality as passive and compromising; male sexuality extends beyond family boundaries while female sexuality centers around marriage and spouse." (Abraham, 2001).

### *Sexting: disembodiment of sex*

As discussed earlier in Chapters II and III, media portrayals of Catholic women as hypersexual means that for Catholic women, their sexuality is always being

scrutinized. It is a perception that that they have to push against even in routine interactions with non-Catholic peers.

Consequently, for Catholic women, virginity becomes a valuable commodity: it allows them to refute stereotypes about hypersexuality and excessive Westernization, which places them outside of the bounds of gendered Indian modernity, which emphasizes that appropriately modernity for Indian women involves sexual sobriety. However, by practicing abstinence, which is emphasized and valued in Catholic culture, Catholic women follows the norms of gendered modernity for Indian women. Thus, in this instance, patriarchal norms of the Catholic Church align with the norms of gendered Indian modernity. By being “good Catholic girls” they can also be “modern Indian women.”

However, this emphasis on virginity presents a conundrum for young women who are trying to understand their sexuality. The fallout of this emphasis on virginal bodies is that sex is often viewed as shameful and something to be kept secret. Practices such as sexting offer an interesting path to navigating these cultural discourses that emphasize virginity. In Cheryl’s case, conflicting work schedules made face-to-face meetings with her boyfriend a rarity. In this case, the mobile phone helped them overcome spatial constraints by allowing them to be in constant touch with each but also to build intimacy.

Cheryl: ...I don’t get to see my boyfriend very often. He is a chef so he works his hours are like too crazy. The time I get to talk to him will be at 3 o’clock in the night when I am dead to the world and you know I just say, “Huh” so I miss him during the day sometimes or whatever. So I message him like nothing sexual to do with his body parts. Basically like, “Missing you. A hug or

kisses or a make out kiss” something like that  
 Marissa: Is it cute or sexual?  
 Cheryl: It can be both. Like today he messaged me. I will give you an example. I kept calling him. We did the whole cat and mouse. He called me and I didn’t answer him. So he was like, “Is there something really pressing hard on you? You want to talk to me?” I said, “Yeah, you are.” and like a smiley. So he laughed about it. That was like something fooling him a bit and it was fun

Cheryl’s points about sexting reveal that sexting is a form of on-going flirting wherein messages are exchanged “for a sensual thrill or a lark” and therefore might be understood as “an act of ardor, a flirtatious exchanges among intimates.” (Durham, 2013, p. 158). It is also salient that Cheryl emphasizes virginity before marriage in her relationship with her boyfriend, but she does not see sexting as a compromising her position on abstinence. Thus, sexting becomes an important way of maintaining sexual intimacy precisely because it does not involve bodily contact. For participants such as Cheryl who value virginity, sexting is “safe sex—virtual, disembodied, digitized and sanitized, it offers the possibility of erotic play without the perils of real-world sexual activity.” (Durham, 2013, p. 158). Durham also points out that sexting is one way for young people living in cultures where premarital sex is taboo to explore issues of gender and sexuality. Such exploration drove Chriselle’s sexting practices.

Marissa: Yeah, so who do you sext with?  
 Chriselle: Maybe friends or it is just for fun.  
 Marissa: So this is not something like with your partner or boyfriend or something like that?  
 Chriselle: I am single.  
 Marissa: You are single, so is it random?  
 Chriselle: Yeah, random. Just friends but it is not too much. It is probably just with one or two people. I don’t go around sexting everyone  
 Marissa: Can you give me an example of what it sounds like?



Chriselle: As in?  
 Marissa: What are the conversations involving sex topics?  
 Chriselle: **[Laughter]** I can't really explain that because I deleted that stuff actually.  
 Marissa: Okay  
 Chriselle: It went something like the guy, he tells me that he is holding me on my waist and then he kisses me on the neck and then the lip, something like that.  
 Marissa: Okay, so it is about sex but in general. Is it always with guys or also with girls?  
 Chriselle: No, only with guys.  
 Marissa: Okay. Have you ever hooked up with these people in real life?  
 Chriselle: No. [Laughter] It came to the point but I backed out

As Chriselle's case illustrates, sexting is not necessarily a practice that is restricted to partners. Sexting is framed as harmless because it is not necessarily foreplay; it is not an invitation for non-virtual sex. Instead, it can be used to satisfy sexual curiosity with few repercussions. However, Anjali saw sexting as a gateway to "real sex" and considered it a way in which her boyfriend was pressuring her to have sex. Still, the disembodied nature of sexting made her feel like it was an acceptable form of sexual intimacy that could be engaged in on occasion, acting as a way of releasing sexual tension in her relationship.

Anjali: Phone sex also to a certain extent involves certain emotions that you get to and then you want to actually have sex which is like just getting yourself closer to having sex. In a sense it is like you can't control yourself so you first have phone sex and then ultimately you land up having sex. So I avoid that.  
 Marissa: So you avoid it?  
 Anjali: Yeah.  
 Marissa: Have you ever done it?  
 Anjali: Yes, once  
 Marissa: So how was it like?  
 Anjali: Ahh  
 Marissa: If you don't want to talk about it, it is fine. ..

Anjali: No, it was fun talking about, you know, “How do you want to kiss someone?” or something like that  
 Marissa: Do you not kiss your boyfriend?  
 Anjali: Yeah, I do  
 Marissa: So then, this is different because?  
 Anjali: It depends on *where* you say you will kiss this person.

Sexting provides Indian-Catholic women with a way of maintaining sexual intimacy with their partners or exploring their sexuality while also preserving their virginity. Through this practice, Catholic women are able to show that they are progressive enough to choose their own partners but traditional enough to practice abstinence. Further, this path to modernity allows Indian-Catholic women to express their sexuality without transgressing norms of the Catholic Church regarding virginity and also provides them with a way of arguing for Catholic culture being similar rather than different from mainstream, modern Indian culture with regard to norms about female sexuality. Thus, through technology practices related to expression of a disembodied sexuality, Indian-Catholic women can claim the identity of “modern Indian woman.”

### **Postscript: embodiment and modernity**

Although modernity is a hallmark of cultural citizenship for young Catholic women (discussed in Chapter III), as I have shown in this chapter, being modern citizens is a challenge because it involves managing risks related to safety and privacy. In other words, cultural citizenship is not easily accessed or maintained. By focusing on the mobile phone practices that help manage privacy and safety and thus help participants maintain cultural citizenship, this chapter emphasizes that cultural citizenship is a

tenuous position that requires constant effort to maintain.

For Catholic women in Mumbai, embodying a modern identity means being mobile even while navigating threats of sexual violence, asserting independence without overtly disrespecting authority figures, and practicing abstinence even while asserting control over romantic relationships. Living out modern expectations regarding mobility and privacy is thus a matter of living out contradictions. The mobile phone practices discussed so far allowed participants to navigate the contradictions embedded in the identity of modern Indian woman, contradictions that are exacerbated by their affiliations with Catholic and Indian culture. As these women explained, mainstream Indian culture views Catholic women as morally bankrupt and sexually available because they have relatively more mobility and freedom in choice of fashion and partners. However, participants also emphasized that this freedom of mobility and choice came at a price: they lived their lives under constant surveillance by priests, parents, and other authority figures; they felt that their fashion sense and perceptions of non-Catholic Indians regarding Catholics put them at a risk for sexual harassment, and in romantic relationships, they were constantly under pressure to practice abstinence in order to negate perceptions regarding their hypersexuality. In matters of both mobility and privacy, their bodies were of central concern: Risk of violence while mobile led to attitudes and practices that emphasized protecting their bodies, while issues of privacy involved attitudes and practices that required them to conceal their sexuality and were a fallout of restrictions to their mobility that resulted in increased surveillance.

The mobile phone practices discussed in this chapter centralize women's bodies,

reminding us that communication is an embodied process. Modern Indian women not only communicate through their bodies but also communicate about their bodies. That is, for women, bodies occupy a central position in any discussion regarding modernity. The mobile phone practices discussed in this chapter have highlighted that Indian women embody modernity through the are skillful management of communication technologies that allow these women to achieve bodies that are both modern and traditional, global and local, subversive and disciplined. Meenakshi Thapan (2001) has pointed out that the “ambivalent construction of the Indian woman as one who is liberated and yet somehow adheres to traditional norms and values is thus a faithful reproduction of what has gone before. What is new, however, is not so much the experience of struggle as the articulation and awareness of this struggle by young women in postcolonial cultures, who seek to produce new cultural forms and practices in the process of constructing themselves as women” (p. 370). Thus, mobile phone practices used for safety and privacy should be seen as a part of a repertoire of cultural practices through which Catholic women manage the contradictions of gendered modernity, a requirement for maintaining cultural citizenship.

This analysis also brings up questions that are important for researchers who advocate for cultural citizenship. “Culture” is a much-maligned, overused term and one that is often used as an excuse to perpetuate marginalizing practices that have existed within a community. As this analysis has shown, cultural citizenship, although valued for it’s ability to help those who are culturally marginalized gain respect, and opportunities, might also reinscribe marginalizing practices within a cultural group.

It is in this context, that intersectionality becomes significant for understanding cultural citizenship. An intersectional approach forces us to question the nature of cultural citizenship that is being promoted. It emphasizes that cultural citizenship is unevenly experienced by those within a community and that it might not hold the same emancipatory potential for all members of a culturally marginalized group. It also explains why movements that assume that cultural affiliation can be a unifying force are flawed and do not receive support from all members of a cultural group. Finally, an intersectional approach to understanding cultural citizenship pushes us to conceptualize cultural citizenship in terms beyond assimilation into the status quo. By using an intersectional approach to understanding the media practices of young Catholic women for maintaining cultural citizenship, this chapter shows that cultural citizenship conceptualized in terms of embodying modernity reinscribes moral policing and the policing of women's bodies, which participants identified as characteristic of both national and Catholic cultures.

## CHAPTER V

### LEARNING AND ACHIEVING MODERNITY: MEDIA CONSUMPTION FOR ACCESSING CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

What do the media practices of Catholic women tell us about their sense of belonging within India and how they negotiate this belonging or access to cultural citizenship? This question has guided the analysis presented in this dissertation, and in this chapter, I continue to explore the various facets of cultural citizenship and the potential of media practices to elaborate the concept by focusing on the viewing practices of young Catholic women. Thus, in this chapter I centralize media consumption in order to understand how globalization and modernity are entangled in developing a culture of citizenship.

The first analysis chapter (Chapter III) discussed photography practices, which Indian-Catholic women use to showcase themselves as modern Indian women. Chapter IV discussed mobile phone practices that reflect the struggles involved in achieving and maintaining this gendered modernity. In this chapter, I explore the movie and television consumption practices of Catholic women to reflect on the role of media in helping Catholic women understand, learn, and articulate cultural citizenship in terms of Indian modernity. Because media consumption allowed my participants to better understand the nuances of Indian modernity and because participants contextualized their media consumption in terms of their cultural backgrounds, I argue that media consumption is a cultural practice of citizenship for young Catholic women.

In general, young Catholic women who participated in this study enjoyed Western television programs but disliked Hindi TV programs, and while these preferences might suggest that cultural imperialism is alive and well, these women enjoy both Bollywood and Hollywood movies, proving once again that “globalization is not the story of cultural homogenization (Appadurai, 1996, p. 11). Instead, globalization in Mumbai is a story of cultural change that occurs via the filtering of Western ideas through local registries: Local traditions and values coexist (at times, uneasily) with Western ideas, a phenomenon that echoes Stuart Hall’s (1991) claim that globalization maintains its allure only through local capitals.

Analyzing the viewing practices of young Catholic women in urban India provides a glimpse into how becoming global citizens and articulating a national identity are mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive processes. In India, the blending of local and global values and aesthetics has become a defining feature of Indian modernity. The implications of this formulation of modernity for young Catholics in Mumbai, whose culture draws on both Indian and Western elements, is that in today’s modern India, such cultural hybridity becomes a resource for claiming belonging to India. This chapter explores media consumption patterns and practices that constitute this hybridity, and argues for understanding these patterns and practices as way in which young Catholic women create a culture of citizenship in which a model citizen is defined as a modern Indian, with hybridity as a central feature of such cultural citizenship.

In this section, I first discuss the consumption of foreign English TV programs by my participants. Next, I explore viewing practices surrounding Hindi programming—

Bollywood and Hindi TV. The media consumption patterns and practices of young Catholic women point to both the significance of content and context in shaping how these youth engage with various media. Hybridity is centralized not only in terms of consumption of various types of media (local and foreign) but also in the sense-making and reasons provided for consuming such a wide range of media.

Perhaps more than any other cultural practice, the media consumption practices of my participants point to how they imagine their place in India as cultural hybrids and work on achieving and maintaining cultural hybridity. In this way, the media consumption of young Catholic women showcases these women's abilities to pick and choose media that help them articulate Indian modernity. The emphasis on hybridity in media consumption highlights that hybridity is a feature of cultural citizenship conceptualized in terms of modernity. Finally, as participants discussed media consumption, it became clear that issues of taste were central to how Catholic women distinguish themselves from non-Catholic peers.

For young Catholic women who construct hybridity as integral to Indian modernity, the experience of living out such hybridity involves careful negotiations of not being too Indian or too Western. Cheryl best articulated the sense of being caught in the middle of two cultures:

Cheryl: Our (Catholic) traditions are very similar. Dissimilar would be, like you know our religion is so Westernized because they (non-Catholic Indians) identify us with you know English, not so much with Indians. So we are always...somehow I feel Catholics are always struggling to find their identity in India because we have still not established (what it is). People still don't recognize us for anything. Even at work sometimes I am totally lost. I mean I feel these people don't understand me at all.



Embedded in this quote is a sense of rootlessness—an experience that results from a feeling of incomplete belonging to a cultural group. Cheryl rejects the overly simplistic framing of Catholic culture as Western by pointing out that Catholic traditions are similar to Indian traditions in the first line of the quote. Therefore, she argues that she is a part of national culture. Yet, in the next sentence she points out that because some aspects of Catholic culture, such as the use of English among young Catholics, are more commonly associated with the West than Indian culture, these Western elements complicate her sense of belonging to national culture, a point that her non-Catholic peers also make. Her sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her identity as incoherent and a struggle to articulate.

Florence articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging in the quote that follows, by explaining that since Christianity was brought to India by foreigners, “there’s always that feeling among Indians that Christianity is an outside religion. And Hinduism originates in India so India is the land of Hindus.” Her statement reinforces what many scholars who study contemporary Indian culture have pointed out—that national culture is equated with Hindu culture (Chakrabati, 2014). Florence negotiates this outsider status by emphasizing the differences between Catholic culture and Hindu or Indian culture in a way that belittles Hindu culture and frames it as not modern.

Florence:        So differences would be our weddings. If we go for a Hindu wedding, you won’t find the couple dancing with each other, they won’t even look at each other. They have those *phas* when they don’t even touch each other, they tie them by their *dupatta* or

something<sup>34</sup>. And when they greet each other we would maybe hug someone, we would kiss them, Hindus don't do that. So I think the freeness that we have.

By aligning Catholic culture in India with contemporary Western norms of expression such as hugging and kissing<sup>35</sup>, Florence equates Catholicism with the West. Through phrases such as “they don't even touch each other” and “they won't even look at each other” when discussing Hindu culture, she equates Hindu culture with not just Indianness and tradition but backwardness. In this way, Catholicism and Indianness are used as stand-ins for modernity and tradition (with tradition being constructed as the antithesis of modernity), respectively. This quote illustrates that cultural hybridity is an uneasy identity when the West and India are positioned as “dialogic counterpoints” for modernity and tradition, respectively (Kraidy, 1999).

In this context, I am concerned with further exploring how cultural hybridity is constituted and reimagined through media consumption of Catholic women. Given that all participants claimed both a national identity and simultaneously emphasized their Catholic culture, I was also interested in understanding how the links between cultural hybridity as an enduring, rather than antithetical, feature of cultural citizenship was forged. I argue that the process of establishing these links involves managing tensions wherein modernity and tradition are positioned as contradictory and reimagining

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<sup>34</sup> Florence's description of the Hindu wedding ceremony provided here is simplistic at best. Similar to matrimonial traditions in Catholicism and other religions, the Hindu ceremony is also filled with symbolism. A central part of the ceremony involves the bride and groom walking around a sacred fire seven times (*pheras*), with each round related to the exchange of different promises made by the couple to each other and either the bride or groom leading at different times. While the couple walks around the fire they are usually bound together by a long piece of cloth, which Florence refers to as *dupatta*.

<sup>35</sup> Leela Abraham's 2001 study examines youth sexuality in contemporary times in urban India.

citizenship in terms of Indian modernity, a discourse that blends modernity and tradition, the local and global, the West and India.

This tension came up in interviews as I discussed with participants what they saw as points of similarities and differences between Catholic culture and Indian culture, it was reflected in the culture wars being played out on TV through censorship, and it appeared in the media consumption practices and patterns that reflect how this discourse of Indian modernity is learned and lived.

This chapter takes as its starting point this framing of the West and India as dialogic counterpoints (Kraidy, 1999) by examining how media consumption of young Indian-Catholic women oscillates between these two competing discourses and provides further insight into how Indian modernity is maintained and achieved through media consumption practices that reflect cultural hybridity.

### **Consuming the West**

Western programming, and more specifically American programming, dominates English programming in India. Many American TV shows were extremely popular among the young women interviewed for this study: *Dexter*, *One Tree Hill*, *MasterChef*, *CSI*, *Big Bang Theory*, and *Castle* to name a few. Thus, the popularity of American programming transcended genre. It is also significant that when asked to name TV shows they watched, most participants listed American TV shows rather than any local TV shows. In fact, most participants spoke disparagingly about local TV programs, characterizing them as overly dramatic and traditional. When asked why they preferred American TV shows, two reasons dominated their answers: participants preferred these

because they were in English and they enjoyed the shows because it allowed them to learn global skills and styles.

*Role of language in media engagement: proximity and capital*

From interviews and participant observation, it was obvious that English was the primary language spoken by participants. In their communication with siblings, peers, and parents, participants used English. Yet, many had parents who did not claim English as their first language and participants reported speaking in regional languages such as Marathi or Konkani with grandparents (Appendix 1). Even today, among Catholics in Mumbai, native languages such as Konkani (for those from Goa and parts of Mangalore), Marathi (for those who originally resided in islands that eventually came together came to form Bombay (now, Mumbai), Kannada and Tamil (for those from parts of Mangalore and other parts of South India) continue to be popular among older generations. However, English is also identified as one of the main languages spoken by Catholics in Mumbai in particular. For example, the majority of church services in Mumbai are in English, although there are a few services in Marathi, Tamil, and Konkani. Similar linguistic communities among Catholic pilgrims from Mumbai are also reported by Margaret Meinhohm (2002) in her ethnography of the Velankani festival in South India<sup>36</sup>.

Thus, the identification of English as primary language by my participants

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<sup>36</sup> The Velankani festival is annual event when Hindus from the southern state of Tamil Nadu and Catholics from all over India visit the shrine of Our Lady of Health located in Velankani. Meinbhom (2002) explains that the Velankani shrine is a site of “hybrid religious practice where pilgrims offer coconuts, shave their heads, and don saffron dress of Indian ascetics. It is the most well-known place of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in India” (p. 62).

appears to be a generational and geographical phenomenon. Understanding the processes involved in the emergence of English as primary language among young Catholics, therefore, became an important puzzle to solve because in the context of this chapter because of the heavy consumption of English media by participants.

The participants in my study were mainly from three Indian-Catholic communities: Goans, Mangloreans, and East Indians. All three communities can trace their conversion to Catholicism to Portuguese rule in India (clubbed together as Portuguese-Catholics to differentiate them from the communities who have different conversion histories) (Robinson, 2003). Throughout the coercive and violent Portuguese conversion history, there is no mention of the spread of English among converts or Indians<sup>37</sup>.

Most historians agree that it was not until the British arrived that English was introduced into India as part of British politician Thomas Babbington Macaulay's civilizing mission to use English to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (cited in John, 2007, p. 18). Eventually, the British conferred additional perks on those who had an English education: Indians who were proficient in English were afforded privileges such as government jobs. These moves by colonial administrators mark the beginning of linguistic stratification in India, resulting in many Indians themselves seeking out English education, mainly upper-caste Hindus (Parameswaran, 1997). However, with

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<sup>37</sup> Converts to Catholicism adopted a number of cultural traditions of colonizers, such as names, lifestyle habits, and even language (Robinson, 2003). The Konkani language in Goa, in particular, provides an interesting study of how it includes Portuguese linguistic elements and vocabulary, with these Portuguese elements persisting even today (Wherritt, 1985).

regard to the spread of English among Catholics, many of whom were of lower caste, literature is sparse.

By and large, however, under British rule, English proficiency was the path to economic and social mobility, and became popular among upper-caste Hindus, who went on to become the “native elite” class. English continued to enjoy a privileged position in independent India also, with India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, naming it an official language of the Union along with Hindi (Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy, 2006). Consequently, the contemporary dominance of English in Catholic communities seems to be tied more closely to the continued position of English as a prestige dialect in modern India and less closely to the community’s roots as religious converts to a colonial religion.

Today, in India, English has become a marker of class, across religious boundaries, signifying access to elite education institutions and cosmopolitanism (McMillin, 2001). The use of English to mark these divisions is obvious during daily interactions, wherein those belonging to middle and upper classes almost never use English when speaking with those they perceive as being of lower class such as maids rickshaw drivers, or hawkers and vendors, assuming that those of lower class lack the ability to communicate in English. Increasingly, business communication is also conducted in English. National media events such as awards ceremonies and sporting events often have English commentary accompanying Hindi commentary and English

and Hindi are official languages of the Union<sup>38</sup>. Aijaz Ahmad (1992) points out that “English is simply one of India’s own languages now, and what is at issue at present is not the possibility of its ejection but the mode of its assimilation into our social fabric, and the manner in which this language, like any other substantial structure of linguistic difference, is used in the processes of class formation and social privilege, here and now” (p. 77).

Perhaps an analysis of English as “cultural capital,” to borrow Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) term, which links cultural elements with power, can provide an answer to Ahmad’s (1992) call to understand the processes at play in English’s ascent as a prestige language and a way to contextualize its privileging among Catholic women. For Bourdieu, cultural capital includes various elements of a culture, ranging from language to education to an ability to decode what is considered tasteful and stylish in a society. Culture becomes a form of capital only when it can be converted to other forms of capital in that such conversion allows agents to improve their overall social position.

Catholic women claim English proficiency and see it as providing cultural capital in modern India. Bourdieu (1994) notes “Because any language that can command attention is an ‘authorized language,’ invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated” (p. 166). In the case of modern India, wherein its citizens are expected to competently navigate not just

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<sup>38</sup> According to the Indian Constitution (1950), Hindi and English would be the official languages of India and the use of English as an official language was to cease after 15 years (in 1965) of independence unless Parliament decided otherwise. However, since Hindi is not spoken by large swathes of Indians, including those from South India, in 1963, the Indian Parliament enacted the Official Languages Act in 1963. This act allowed English to be used for official purposes even after 1965.

Indian society but global culture, English becomes cultural capital because it remains the *lingua franca* of globalization. Further, English proficiency signifies not only proficiency in a globally privileged language but also a proficiency in all things global. For Catholic women, English proficiency acts as symbolic cultural capital signifying their competence as global citizens. The links between English proficiency, globalization, and cultural capital are reflected in Sabrina's quote presented below.

Sabrina: Let's face it: Today, we're moving towards globalization. So you need to conduct yourself or maybe speak in a more global(ly) appealing manner. So I guess at that time we do win. Like for families who have only spoken Hindi earlier or maybe used English as a second language, it's much more difficult for them to compete with someone like us who've spoken English our entire lives. So, yes, things like that. There are advantages to it, especially now that I think we're moving towards a more global world. But I do think some people feel like we're like snobbish or brats just because we're not associated that much with them.

In Sabrina's quote, she designates English proficiency as "globally appealing" speech and points out that such competency is expected of Indians now that India is "moving towards globalization." Further, she explains that her English proficiency means that those who speak it as second-language cannot "compete," clearly indicating that it functions as a form of capital, affording opportunities that might not be available to others. Such opportunities might include but are not limited to employment multinational companies and the distinction of a cosmopolitan identity. The use of English to mark distinction is seen in the latter half of the quote where Sabrina notes that she sees English proficiency as differentiating Catholics from other Indians and goes on to frame such difference as privilege by suggesting that Catholics are seen as "snobs" or



“brats,” implying that Catholics are envied for their ability to communicate in English.

Her quote also implicates English proficiency as a site of struggle for young Catholics by framing it as a point of ambivalence about their Indian identity. Catholics, who are traditionally not seen as authentic Indians, view affiliation with Western practices such as English proficiency more beneficial than learning traditional Indian languages (including those historically associated with Indian-Catholic communities) in current climate where being a global citizen is seen as desirable. For Mumbai’s Catholics, English language fluency solidifies their position as modern Indians, an identity that is privileged and desirable within contemporary national discourse that emphasizes India as an important player in the global economy.

Postcolonial scholars have noted that in modern India, English fluency affords social and economic mobility (Parameswaran, 1997), and Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy (2006) note that “contemporary India seems to have separated the English language from the English rulers, and the country has shed its colonial complexes toward English. The nation has come to terms with English, and Indians have understood that, with globalization, English has become an economic necessity, and that they have the “English advantage” over many other countries like China, Japan, and Germany (p. vi). It is these pressures that leads older Catholics to not only emphasize the importance of English fluency among young Catholics but also contributes to the acceptance of English replacing traditional languages in Mumbai’s Catholic community. For participants, being educated in Catholic convent schools provides additional

reinforcement for the emphasis on learning fluent English promoted by their parents<sup>39</sup>. In the excerpt below, Cheryl's father played an important role in shaping her preference for English media.

- Cheryl: Oh gosh, we used to watch Hindi because I think we had DD and Metro whatever as kids. When cable came the thing is my dad was always abroad and he did not like us speaking in Hindi. He was very strict about it. So when he came down from the (United) States. He was in the States for quite some time and he was in the American phase so he didn't let us, he cut us from all our Hindi serials. I remember we used to watch this serial '*Banegi Apni Baat*' as kids.
- Marissa: Yeah?
- Cheryl: So he cut that out from us. So then we had to watch English serials and he was very strict about it.
- Marissa: Why?
- Cheryl: Because he felt that we don't know English. I mean if we speak Hindi our English is going to get really bad and it is going to ruin our tongue. So he was very insistent on English and he read a lot of books to my mother and my dad forced us to read a lot of books as kids.

By pointing out that her father cultivated her preference for English media, Cheryl confirms Bourdieu's (1984) assertion that cultural capital is accumulated within social institutions such as educational institutions and family. Cheryl's father did not merely encourage her to watch English, but "he was very strict about it" because Hindi would "ruin" her tongue. In this way, by privileging English above Hindi, her father reproduces Eurocentric norms that he himself internalized during his stay in the United States and then teaches these hierarchies to his children. This hierarchy is taught by teaching them to appreciate English media, such as English TV shows and books, both

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<sup>39</sup> The unevenness in English language use and spread among different class and religious communities is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, my fieldwork suggested that in non-Catholic communities, English complements a community's local language. However, among Young Catholics, English has begun to replace local languages.

of which cultural products of the West. His actions are thus an example of how “through all the hierarchies and classifications inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (for example, the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgments, verdicts, gradings and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interactions of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 471). Thus, it is in the family that Cheryl has learned that English proficiency is a mark of distinction and the family is one site where this hierarchy has been normalized.

Among Catholic women who participated in this study, community affiliations were also established along linguistic lines. All participants claimed proficiency in English, and it is not a coincidence that most came from middle-class families or aspired to achieve middle-class status by using their English fluency to distinguish themselves from lower-class Catholics or non-Catholics.

Amelia: But the minute you start speaking English, if you look at the vocabulary that a Catholic would use compared to, like in the college I experienced that the Hindus vocabulary would be very general. They would use general terms but Catholics sometimes tend to use hi-fi<sup>40</sup> words.

Amelia’s statement reflects a sentiment that I encountered repeatedly during my fieldwork: namely, that Catholics believed that they had a better command over English because it was the language they were exposed to the most in their families and through their media consumption patterns. Further, since participants’ social circles developed in

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<sup>40</sup> Hi-fi: A colloquialism that means sophisticated.

Catholic (usually) schools and Church communities, their social lives were dominated by young Catholics who used English as the language of everyday communication with peers. Some participants also reported that English was more common among Catholics than non-Catholics based on their experiences in college with non-Catholic peers who would prefer going for Hindi movies or listening to Hindi music in contrast to participants' who said they preferred English media. These patterns led to sentiments such as those expressed by Amelia—that English was more commonly and proficiently used among young Catholics than non-Catholics.

In addition to using English to distinguish themselves from non-Catholics, my middle-class or aspiring middle-class participants used English as a marker of class and sophistication. In particular, the disdain with which lower-class Tamil Catholics<sup>41</sup> in Mumbai were discussed suggests that English language continues to be a marker of class. As evidence, I offer two examples from my fieldwork: One evening, I wanted to attend a late evening mass, which unbeknownst to me was conducted in Tamil. Later, I found out that it was primarily attended by Tamil-Catholics from a nearby slum and young Tamil women who work as maids in the area. When I mentioned wanting to attend this mass to two participants, they looked at me incredulously, wrinkled their noses, and exclaimed that it was preposterous to think of sitting with “those ‘uundu-guundu’ Tamilians.” The use of “unndu-guundu,” basically a nonsensical word that mimicked sounds of the Tamil language in a pejorative fashion shows how class and regional hierarchies are constituted in terms of English proficiency. The second incident

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<sup>41</sup> Not to be confused with South India's Syrian Christians, who have a conversion history different from those of Portuguese Catholics (Robinson, 2003).

involves a You Tube video, “What man Santa” (Figures 8 and 9). The low-budget video featured a Catholic man and a group of young Catholic women singing a song to the Koli rhythms often used in wedding songs in the East-Indian Catholic community. The English lyrics followed syntactical structures and vocabulary that drew on Marathi and Konkani and is a style of English commonly associated Mumbai’s Catholic community (Fernandes, 2012). The video was extremely popular among young Catholics who found it extremely funny. Even as they recognized the tropes used in the video for Catholics, my participants distanced themselves from these tropes by laughing at the characters in the video and emphasizing that such English was used only by “unsophisticated Catholics.”

In both examples, my participants enacted a “logic of difference, of differential deviation” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 237) built on exclusion and inclusion, which Bourdieu explains is the basic logic under which all symbolic systems, including language, operate. This logic is based on a system of binaries, and the binaries ultimately reflect power relations. By mocking the language and accents of Tamil-Catholics and the Catholics portrayed in the viral video, participants applied a “logic of exclusion” via which they grouped those who do not speak English and those who speak English with regional accents as low class and distinguished themselves as better than these by noting how they differed from these other groups. That is, they created binaries of English-speaking/Tamil-speaking and Eurocentric accent/regional accent that symbolized distinction/vulgarity. In this way, they created internal classifications and hierarchies within their religious community that favored their own social position and reified the

dominance of Eurocentric culture.

Among the young women I interviewed, English dominated their everyday life.

Thus, it was no surprise that many preferred foreign programming in English.

Anjali: Indian people also do understand English, and I like watching shows in English... something that is easier for me. Although I have been watching Hindi since I was small but since I speak in English and since I am always around people talking in English, I like English

Natasha: My dad has always been watching Star Movies, or HBO, or whatever. So even Star World. So when we were growing up we have always been watching English channels.

For Anjali and Natasha, since they had grown-up in households where English predominated, they preferred English media. This relationship between language and media consumption can also be theorized using the concept of cultural proximity. Cultural proximity was theorized by Straubhaar (1991) as a critique of cultural imperialism theories (Schiller, 1969) in order to explain the continued popularity of domestic productions, despite saturation of the market with “global” media from powerful production centers such as Hollywood. In the case of young Catholic women, however, we see that although they prefer foreign programming over local programming, the reason for these preferences are because they prefer consuming media in a language they know well. This is in line with studies that have shown that cultural proximity is not always related to geographical location. Straubhaar (2003) explains cultural proximity as “the tendency to prefer media products from one’s own culture or the most similar possible culture” (p. 85), and in some cases, foreign media might reflect audiences’ cultural elements more than local media. Language is often emphasized as

central to cultural proximity and it explains the continued preference that many immigrant populations have for media in languages from their home countries. Janet, for example, emphasized that when engaging with Hindi media, she needed to focus on comprehension because she was not fluent in the language. Consequently, rather than enjoying the media, her focus would be on comprehension. This was not the case with English media, which she understood easily.

Janet: I just stick to the English. Firstly because I have a difficulty in understanding Hindi movies

Marissa: The language or?

Janet: No, I can understand it but it is then really like you have to like pay attention to it. You know it is not something like English. Like English you just watch it and you understand it. It is easy like. I don't really like, I know like little Hindi and all and Marathi and all, I really can't understand them.

The links between understanding of media and issues of immersion and enjoyment are further clarified by Katy.

Katy: When it comes to English music because I am so fluent with the language I really appreciate the lyrics more than the actual music because I think when you connect to the song it feels more awesome and you tend to sing it and all that. But I can't do that with Hindi. I just have to listen to it. I can't sing it along. I can't relate to it. So it is quite pointless for me.

Katy's linking of understanding with engagement reflects contemporary research on cultural proximity (Piñón & Rojas, 2011; Adriaens & Biltereyst, 2012), which points out that engagement is a multi-faceted concept and for audiences to connect with media, media should reflect cultural elements from the audience member's culture. In the case of young Indian-Catholics, English language is the cultural element that allows for

deeper engagement with foreign texts. In addition to language, similarities with other cultural elements such as dress, music, humor, story pacing, and religion have also been found to contribute to cultural proximity (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). Young Indian-Catholics preference for English language media shows how religion and language in the Indian context might not be mutually exclusive cultural elements and might work in tandem to create a sense of cultural proximity with foreign media. Moreover, for young Indian-Catholics, who have been trained to prefer and become competent in English, and realize that it is a source of cultural capital. Western programming is more appealing because they find English programs both easier to understand and a better cultural investment than programs in local Indian languages.

Further, for minority populations whose experiences might not be reflected in mainstream media, foreign media may be more engaging if audiences perceive the lifestyle or narratives in these media as more relatable to their cultural lives. In Indian programming, particularly Hindi entertainment programming, Hindu culture is usually celebrated, while minority religious cultures are rarely portrayed or if they are portrayed, they draw on negative stereotypes. Such cultural dominance is particularly obvious in Hindi TV soaps that are immensely popular with mainstream Indian audiences. This emphasis on Hindu culture in local programming was also noted by participants.

Tania: Very strong like Hinduism is like a very big thing in Indian media. They always have to start off with a temple or some girl always crying in front of God and they are running away and getting married away in a temple. So it is like it is very centered around other religions

Nina: TV shows, yeah they have a lot of *pujas* (Hindu ritual of worship) and all I guess, so it does play a big role



The dominance of Hindu cultural motifs in local Hindi programming might be one reason why young Catholics lack a connection with these shows. Although women play central roles in Hindi soap operas, the women are Hindu, usually living in the joint family system, and have problems that are associated with living in such a system. For most young Catholic women, this situation lacks resonance with their lived experience, because most were a part of nuclear families and they perceived their lives as being very different from Hindu women. Consequently, the issues portrayed in Hindi soaps were not seen as relevant to their lives. In addition to explicit references to Hindu religion, participants such as Amelia pointed out other cultural elements such as dance forms with which she did not identify. Amelia explained that she preferred watching *Dancing with the Stars* rather than “*Jhalak Dikhla Jaa*” India’s version of the American dance show because she did not connect with references to Indian dance forms. Instead, she preferred the American version that incorporated some Latin dance elements that are particularly popular among Catholics of Portuguese descent.

Amelia: As a Catholic I would relate more to you know salsa or a jive rather than *Bharatnatyam* or *Kathak* (Indian dance forms) where I would not probably understand the terms. So that is the reason I would prefer it

Responses such as Amelia’s indicate that if audiences’ lives are not reflected in local media, they may reject local media and prefer foreign media instead, particularly if these foreign media incorporate cultural elements that are missing in local media. This result corresponds with La Pastina’s (2004) findings regarding the popularity of Mexican

telenovelas among rural audiences in Brazil, who did not identify with the modernization narrative in local Brazilian telenovelas and thus preferred Mexican telenovelas.

Although most participants preferred English media, Veronica was an outlier in this regard. She preferred Hindi media to English media. She explained that she preferred *Jhalak Dikhla Jaa* because she knew the TV personalities involved in the show, a result of her sustained consumption of Hindi TV. Veronica was also an outlier in that she could speak Hindi, Marathi, and English fluently, which further explained why she enjoyed Hindi media.

Veronica: I would choose *Jhalak* because I know those people. I don't watch that much of English movies and so I don't know. So I feel I like more *Jhalak* because I know the judges, I know them and I relate to it.

Marissa: So compared to other Catholic women who typically watch a lot of English programming, you prefer Hindi because...

Veronica: Because as a kid I've grown up in a place where there were a lot of Hindus I think that has also affected because even there are lot of Catholics who say who's Hindi goes like "*thumarrrra merrrrra*" but I don't really speak like that, my Hindi is quite fluent and Marathi even more. So I think that's because of where I grew up, it was completely like all cultures and things like that.

Veronica distinguishes herself from her Catholic peers mainly in terms of her multilingualism. She connects her multilingualism to her upbringing in a multicultural environment and goes on to attribute her upbringing in this environment to her preferences for Hindi media. Veronica's critique of her Catholic peers inability to speak unaccented Hindi (she mocks them by rolling and stretching out her "Rs" in the phrase "*thumarrrra merrrrra*") also raises an interesting point in light of Bourdieu's discussion of cultural capital. For the majority of Catholic participants, their ability to speak English fluently afforded them cultural capital in terms of claiming citizenship within a global

culture. However, given the continuing emphasis on both Hindi and English in India, distinction is not achieved by merely being able to be global citizens but also by showing affiliation with local, national cultures. Veronica's competence in local languages *and* English, i.e., her multilingualism, affords her cultural capital in both the national and global arena. This multilingualism allows her to show that she is neither too Western (because she has not lost touch with local culture) and neither is she too traditional (because she can speak a globally privileged language), and thus, her linguistic hybridity corresponds with the blend of tradition and modernity than marks Indian modernity.

Veronica's excerpt also shows that although cultural elements contribute to cultural proximity, there is no easy correspondence between identity markers (such as religious affiliation) and cultural elements: Culture matters, but culture is dynamic and how culture is (being) constituted also matters. When theorizing audience engagement in terms of cultural proximity, it is crucial to pay attention to how culture is being defined so that context is not ignored in such theorizing.

Koichi Iwabachi (2002) critiques early conceptualizations of cultural proximity for their framing of cultural elements as intrinsic to a culture and thus presenting culture as ahistorical. Instead, to explain Taiwanese audiences interest in Japanese TV shows in the 1990s, Iwabachi points to contemporary conditions (diminishing spatio-temporal conditions between Taiwan and Japan as a result of political and market forces) that resulted in cultural similarities between Taiwanese and Japanese cultures, resulting in Taiwanese audiences finding Japanese media culturally proximate. In this analysis also, I have used use cultural proximity to explain to why American TV is preferred by young

Indian-Catholic women, but rather than homogenizing the Catholic community in India, I have attempted to connect English language fluency among young Catholics to colonial and more recent globalization processes. That is, I have tried to emphasize that cultural proximity is not a static concept for a particular community and it does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, it is constituted in a particular historical moment. To emphasize this dynamism of culture is to also acknowledge that there are power relations at play in the constitution of cultural proximity. The next section, which focuses on how Western media were used by participants to improve themselves, deals more explicitly with how discussions of cultural proximity are enhanced by paying attention to power relations.

*Accumulating cultural capital: learning to be global*

Although English language and some cultural markers rendered American media culturally proximate to young Catholic audiences in Mumbai, a number of cultural elements were foreign to participants. For example, some found American accents hard to understand and therefore used subtitles when viewing TV programs on computers. Although American legal and crime dramas were popular, young Indian-Catholics had little knowledge about legal and criminal systems in the US. Many enjoyed watching American culinary shows but lamented their lack of access to ingredients used in those shows. Yet, the foreign programs were preferred. Why were American TV shows so popular among these young women despite the presence of numerous foreign cultural elements? As participants' answers revealed, American shows acted as resources, allowing young Catholics to learn about global lifestyles and aesthetics. That is,

watching American TV allowed Catholic women to learn about one of the key features of Indian modernity introduced in Ch. 1—an appreciation for global aesthetics

The use of American TV to learn about modernity has been documented previously by Featherstone (1990), although he also argues against equating globalization with Americanization. Instead, he suggests that the West should be thought of as a point of reference against which non-Western cultures define their difference. Iwabuchi (2002) suggests that cases of engagement with American media should be thought of as desired proximity to modernity rather than true cultural proximity. Further, he points out that American media are no longer viewed as the only classrooms for learning modernity in East Asian countries because countries such as Japan now provide media that provide a more familiar form of modernity that is filtered through local cultural values.

In this analysis, I will demonstrate that participants viewed American media to learn about modernity but selectively focused on aspects of media that they coded as being in line with or important to Indian formulations of modernity and rejected those aspects of foreign media that clashed with their understanding of Indian modernity. Thus, cultural proximity was a strategic filter deployed by audiences rather than an inherent feature of American media. To focus on cultural proximity as an assessment made by audiences is also to open up the concept to the particular historical contexts in which audiences are embedded and constituted.

Chriselle, a young college student and an aspiring singer, provided an interesting example of how American TV and movies are used to learn about modernity. Chriselle

began watching English TV shows to improve her English. Improving English in this context meant not only expanding her vocabulary but also polishing her accent so that it lacked Indian inflections. Although participants claimed English as their primary language, they still found it difficult to comprehend American accents in their favorite TV shows. Part of this confusion is ameliorated in India by subtitles that are provided for all foreign English programming. Still, rather than rejecting American TV shows that required “extra” attention in terms of simultaneously focusing on content and subtitles, participants still reported being ardent fans of TV shows. Rather than interfering with engagement, subtitles were useful because they helped participants note the pronunciation of English words.

Part of the reason why participants found American accents and vocabulary difficult to comprehend was that in India, British English remains the norm. While Hinglish is liberally used in urban areas such as Mumbai, participants noted that such English was not “correct.” Among Catholics also, there is particular brand of English used wherein some phrases and syntax are direct translations of Marathi or Konkani. Although this might be the brand of English used in informal settings, participants are taught in convent schools and by parents that such English lacks prestige and is a mark of low class. Those with access to high-quality education, such as that provided in convent schools, are expected to know and use the Queens’s English rather than any variations thereof. This emphasis on using media to improve language skills corresponds with the use of dictionary apps by some participants (Nina) to expand their vocabulary.

- Chriselle: When I was small I used to watch only Hindi movies because I used not to understand the English movies. I was too small to catch up with their pace because their accent is different and they are quite fast when they talk. So I used to watch more of Hindi but then all of a sudden. I don't know when this transition took place but I started liking more of English movies and I realized that watching them it helped me you know increase my vocabulary. Even reading books, I know even reading books is another way but even watching movies helped me. So then that is when I changed to English movies and I stopped watching Hindi so that I could you know work on my speech.
- Marissa: So why did you feel the need to work on your speech?
- Chriselle: I wouldn't be able to answer that. I just wanted to have, yeah because my cousins were good at it. Like they used good words when they talk and you know they are very confident. You can make out when a person is confident in their speech or if they are fumbling which I still do. So yeah, to minimize the fumbling I started watching English movies but I also read books

Chriselle defined English proficiency narrowly. It was not enough to know English; it also involved speaking fluently (no “fumbling”), with confidence, having a large vocabulary, and using English that was devoid of any colloquialisms. Chriselle's quote illustrates that although young Catholic women prefer foreign English TV shows because they understand English better than Hindi, they still believe their English is not “good enough” and requires further work. The accents, vocabulary, and inflections in foreign media are constructed as the gold standard. Viewing foreign media is an investment in their efforts to become global, and in this instance, global is equated with Western. The work that is put into disciplining accents and vocabulary to conform to Western standards positions them as the *petit bourgeoisie* of global culture struggling to conform to the culture of the Western bourgeoisie (Bourdieu, 1986).

The efforts to erase any local markers in their speech also suggests an internalization of inferiority regarding local Indian culture, which Fanon (1967) points

out is an enduring psychological effect in colonial subjects. Homi Bhabha (1985) terms the efforts of colonial subjects to imitate (but always fall short of perfectly replicating) colonial culture as colonial mimicry- “the identification with, and performance of, colonial superiority by the subordinated” ...in which “colonial subjects set out to become as much like their masters as possible, both in order to reap the rewards that this imitation will garner but, as well, because they have come to believe in their own inferiority”(in Rajiva and D’Sylva, 2014, p. 148).

The young women I interviewed had, of course, not grown up during British rule, but they are still postcolonial subjects in that their lives continue to be bound up in the residues of British colonialism: the continued dominance of English as a prestige language in India, education within a British system of education in English-medium schools, and discourses of globalization that present Third-World countries such as India as outside of modernity (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). Together, these discourses maintain the epistemic violence of colonizers and lead young Catholic women to engage in practices that mimic former colonizers because they recognize that these colonial elements afford opportunities to reclaim “Indianness” in modern India. However, to construct this engagement solely in terms of a negative practice and ignore the pleasure participants derived from these practices is to rob these participants of agency. As Appadurai (1996) notes, “consumption in the contemporary world is often a form of drudgery, part of the capitalist civilizing process. Nevertheless, where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency. Freedom, on the other hand, is a rather more elusive commodity” (p.7). That is, to be embroiled in



power relations is not necessarily to be without or agency, and agency and emancipation are not necessarily synonymous.

In addition to learning “global English,” young Catholic women also saw English TV shows as “resources for experiments with self-making” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). In today’s age of globalization, Appadurai points out that media and migration impel the imagination of modern citizens, that is, they urge citizens to visualize and aspire to new ways of existing in our increasingly interconnected world. Sabrina and Chriselle’s explanations that foreign media allow them to learn about global culture become salient in this context.

Sabrina: I would choose *MasterChef Australia* I guess mainly because a lot of the cuisine that they show is cuisine that – I mean, I’ve just watched one program of *MasterChef India* but it was something that we always do. You know *palak paneer*<sup>42</sup> is made at my place also– the only thing is there’s the novelty issue when you watch things like *MasterChef Australia* because I had never known how to make pasta. We always bought it from the store, so it was nice to see that. How we put it through the grinder or maybe make – doesn’t normally do that which I don’t think is like that much in *MasterChef India*.

Chriselle: Because I probably would get to learn something. I would know how to bake or cook and I would like the stuff they make compared to the Indian show that has probably something very traditional, like maybe Gujarati food or any other.

*MasterChef America* and later *MasterChef Australia* were popular among almost all participants. At the time, *MasterChef India* was also being aired. *MasterChef India* involved participants from India and included culinary challenges involving recipes that are common in Indian kitchens. For Sabrina, the inclusion of familiar cultural elements

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<sup>42</sup> North Indian dish made of spinach and cottage cheese.

was what made the show boring. Rather, she enjoyed the “novelty” of the foreign versions of *MasterChef*. Although I did not have the opportunity to watch *MasterChef Australia* with Sabrina, I watched the show multiple times with Tania. Tania would periodically exclaim that she wished she could taste the dishes prepared by the contestants and would often ask me if I had tasted the dishes mentioned in the show or if I knew how to make them. In order to learn more about the techniques and recipes she saw on the show, Tania also bought a copy of the magazine *Good Housekeeping*, which sells at a rather high price in India. On learning that I could make a New York cheesecake, Tania excitedly arranged for a trip to one of the elite grocery stores in the area so that we could purchase foreign brand ingredients (ultimately, we settled for using Indian brand ingredients because the foreign ingredients were too expensive). We then prepared the cheesecake together and even afterwards, Tania continued to ask me if I knew any other foreign recipes.

I include this incident as an example of “the work of the imagination” in modern India. Foreign shows such as *MasterChef* informed Tania about foreign dishes and framed these dishes as special (unlike the dishes on *MasterChef India* which were mundane for most participants). Further, Tania and others noted the emphasis on culinary techniques in the foreign *MasterChef* and pointed out that this suggested a level of expertise involved in executing these dishes that seemed to be absent when preparing local dishes. Thus, local cuisine was positioned as unsophisticated, while global cuisine was considered sophisticated. Acquiring the skills to prepare sophisticated cuisine could mean another step closer to toward a global lifestyle and thus Tania jumped at

opportunities to expand her culinary skills. As this incident demonstrates, foreign media provide scripts for becoming modern and participants not only learn these scripts but also attempt to execute these scripts. Global fashion was another a script that participants described learning from foreign TV shows such as *Gossip Girl* and *One Tree Hill*. The use of foreign media to learn about cosmopolitan lifestyle and aesthetics has been documented previously. Lin & Tong (2008) point out that female Chinese viewers of Korean soaps appreciated cultural products. Further, they point out that these viewing practices created aspirations to engage with these cultural products, thus promoting a consumerist lifestyle. In Tania's case we see a similar connection between viewing of American reality TV shows and her consumption practices. As discussed earlier, consumption is considered an important of Indian modernity, and in Tania's example we see how the viewing practices of participants promotes a "mediated globalized consumer lifestyle" (Lin & Tong, 2008, p. 101).

In addition to learning to be modern, responses that compared foreign TV shows with their Indian versions reveal additional dimensions of how Catholic women imagined modernity.

Amelia: Because it is very, see (*Dancing with the Stars*) is elegant. See one thing is that and then you can learn a lot from them because in terms of the style, the way they carry themselves, the way they answer the questions that are put forth, the way they tackle a situation. You don't have unnecessary drama like you know in '*Jhalak Dhikla Jha*' practically every episode will have pre-planned drama whereas you don't have that in *Dancing with the Stars*. Yes, I do agree in television you do plan some of the drama that comes up on TV but it is not as regular and as frequent as we have it in '*Jhalak Dhikla Jha*'.

Amelia was not alone in associating drama with Indian versions of the foreign shows. Zara explained that *MasterChef India* was focused on drama rather than cooking, unlike *MasterChef Australia*, and for Priyanka, and Jasmine the drama in local TV shows was a veneer for incompetence.

Priyanka: I used to watch the Indian version so even now that has gone for me. I would like the English version over the Hindi one. Kind of like even there was this show *Minute to Minute* in the American one the people would actually practice the games. They would practice it and only then they would get onto the show and in the Indian one they couldn't really do it. Even these *MTV Roadies* where one season none of them could do any of the stunts.

Jasmine: Honestly I see more *Dancing with the Stars* if I had to watch I can see more technique, I can see more form, I can see something new happening, I can see judges qualified at some point to make a daring decision. Obviously *Jhalak* is a rip off of *Dancing with the Stars* I would rather watch the original. While for *Jhalak* judges are not qualified. You will have your whoever. There is no form. Even the simplest thing like when you dip and come back on top. Just because they are probably a singer or a whatever, like Shaan, who is not a dancer, when actually if you are a dancer, then that is horrible. You can't do that. So, it is all false opinion there. So I would rather watch 'Dancing with the Stars'

Lisa: Because I find that reality shows in India are very fake, very preplanned and all that but still I watch it. Yeah like the contestants are again fake and the way they cook. India is more about Indian dishes only. I mean though they cook something else and I think it is slightly little fake. I don't like watching *MasterChef India*

Comparisons made by Jasmine, Lisa, and Priyanka reveal that local Indian versions of shows were seen as “rip-offs”. The inclusion of local elements into global media—glocalization of media content—is supposed to make local versions of shows more appealing and engaging to audiences (Rao, 2010). However, although these Indianized reality shows might be popular among mainstream audiences, young Catholic

women cast them as “rip-offs.” By labeling these Indian versions as inauthentic, we see participants taking on a more evaluative role by claiming knowledge about what the programs should be. For example, Jasmine explained that Shaan, a well-known Indian singer, was not qualified to judge a dance competition and then went on to critique his dancing style. By critiquing Shaan’s dance moves, Jasmine shifts from her position as learner when watching *Dancing with the Stars* to expert when watching *Jhalak Dikhla Jaa*. Her use of vocabulary typically used by dancers such as “form” and “dip” further solidify her position as expert. This shift from learner to expert is significant because it shows how Catholic women apply knowledge about global aesthetics. In this case, to evaluate Shaan, Jasmine drew on knowledge gained from watching *Dancing with the Stars* and applied it to the Indian context. That is, she used global standards to evaluate local media content. Priyanka also performed a similar move by using *Minute by Minute* as the standard to judge the local version of the show. By coding the skills of participants’ on the American *MasterChef* as authentic, but the skills of local participants’ as “fake,” Lisa refuses to accept that traditional, Indian participants can have modern skills. Through their scathing dismissal of Indian versions, participants, thus, reclaimed their position as cosmopolitan consumers with expert knowledge of global aesthetics, thanks to their viewing of foreign media.

Another reason why participants disliked Hindi TV programs was because they perceived them as overly dramatic and emotional. In contrast, foreign programs were seen as rational and professional. By associating and rejecting emotion and drama with local programming, participants demonstrated their preference for modern aesthetics

wherein rationality and realism to over-the-top depictions. In this instance, by rejecting aesthetics of Hindi TV programs, participants claiming a preference for global aesthetics, which aligns with the results presented in Ch. III regarding participants preference for global aesthetics. As in the quotes above, Tania's quote below also shows how the aesthetics of Hindi TV as rejected because of excessive drama.

- Tania: Yes, I don't watch any Hindi TV shows.  
 Marissa: Why?  
 Tania: Because they are too dramatic. They are very dramatic and very unrealistic all the time and the same shit happens all the time.  
 Marissa: So which ones are you specifically referring to?  
 Tania: 'Saas-Bahu'<sup>43</sup> sagas. There is nothing else. Remaining things now on Indian television is only dance and I am not particularly fond of watching choreographed dance.
- Sonia: The Indian soaps all run on how do I ruin this person's life, it has to have a villain. Wherein the English programs don't have really a villain in it, it just has normal people in their lives and the issues in the normal life that they face. There's not about, there's no one here to ruin somebody else's life. Its more normal, it's very human, you can relate to it. You can imagine living that life, you can't imagine living a Hindi soap life where you have an enemy throughout your entire life who's willing to kill you or just plotting to kill you every single day of your life

The persistent association of English media with realism, complexity, and authenticity and the rejection of Hindi TV because of its excessive drama elements, fakeness, and frivolity show that what is at stake in these discussions is an assertion of taste, which is a marker of class (Bourdieu, 1986). In the quotes above, Catholic women aligned English media consumption with superior taste and Hindi media consumption

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<sup>43</sup> Colloquialism for Indian soap operas that focus on the politics of living in Hindu joint families. A number of these are produced by Ekta Kapoor, who typically titles her programs with the letter "K". Therefore, these soaps are also called "K-serials."

with inferior taste and thus through these evaluations asserted their competence as cosmopolitans capable of discerning the codes of global culture.

In the context of reclaiming young Catholic women's agency in preferring foreign, English media and avoiding assertions that their affinity for global culture was based on negation of local culture, it is also important to note that preference for Western programming did not mean a wholesale rejection of Indian culture or blind aping of Western tastes and lifestyles. Even if American TV programs were preferred, they were not viewed uncritically. In fact, many participants discussed aspects of American TV shows they found problematic, most often the lack of respect shown by teenagers toward parents, unstable family structures, pre-marital sex among youth, and moving out of the family home at an early age (which participants coded as weak family bonds). These TV shows provided young Catholic women with scripts for understanding youth culture in the United States, and although they found parts of American youth culture appealing, they were not cultural dupes. In summary, through their reception of American TV shows, young Catholic women articulated their Indian-Catholic identity in terms of hybridity. They emphasized their Indianness by embracing what they termed as Indian values regarding respect for elders, sexual sobriety, and family-centeredness but rejected practices such as docility among women, anti-Western attitudes, and emphasis on rituals, which they described as the traditional or backward aspects of Indian culture.

Participants also disliked the portrayal on women in Hindi soap operas. These soap operas, typically known as *saas-bahu* soaps or K-series enjoy incredible popularity. But for young Catholic women these serials hold little to no appeal.

Repeatedly, they stated that they found the portrayal of women in these serials problematic. The focus on women solely as homemakers and nurturers did not appeal to young Catholic women who saw themselves as modern Indian women, moving between public and private spheres, rather than the traditional, upper-caste Hindu women in K-serials who were focused on family politics and were consistently tethered to the home. Reema points out the emphasis of Hindu religious practices in Indian TV soaps and sees the portrayal of women as conservative and homebound in these soaps as an extension of Hindu culture.

Reema: Everything is about religion over there (in Indian soaps). They are always praying at the temples and mandir and stuff like that. It is not, it is like how the mentality over here is it is mostly with the programs.

Marissa: What do you mean?

Reema: Like over here the girl is supposed to be in the house cooking, not going out. That is how the people over here have the views like that. They are always wearing saris. No open clothes and stuff like that. The girls don't work. They are always in the house working for the mother-in-law and stuff like that.

Reema's reading of these soaps corresponds with Chakrabarti's (2014) analysis wherein he points out that Hindi soap operas are complicit in narrowing the definition of Indianness to upper-caste Hindu culture. This is achieved by developing a definition of Indianness that relies on "the overtly Hindu upper-caste, urban joint family which was perpetually engaged in performative displays of an efflorescent Hinduness, whose milieu was saturated with religious symbolism, whose discourse was borrowed from the



discourses of Hindutva<sup>44</sup>, and in which the women were almost always safely ensconced in the private sphere of the home” (p. 487).

As discussed in previous chapters, young Catholic women consistently distanced themselves from Hindu women, who they saw as traditional and not modern enough. A similar distancing can be seen in their rejection of Indian soap operas. Not only did my participants not identify with the upper-caste Hindu women portrayed in the soaps but they also rejected these portrayals as epitomizing Indian womanhood. For my participants, modern Indian women were nothing like the women portrayed in the serials. In fact, even deriving enjoyment from watching such “backward” programs was looked down upon by participants such as Tara, who stated: “I think career wise, I think we are waking and realizing that we can have more than being just sitting at home and watching Hindi serials.”

### **Building community**

Although young Catholic women preferred Western TV programs, they consumed Hindi TV in specific contexts. Hindi media was considered suitable for viewing with parents because it was perceived as having less sexually explicit content than English media. Further, a number of participants reported that their parents watched Hindi TV programs. Thus, watching Hindi TV along with parents was one way in which family ties were maintained.

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<sup>44</sup> In its contemporary usage, it is a discourse associated with Hindu fundamentalism that links Indianness to Hindu religion.

As mentioned earlier, most participants lived with their parents and the only TV was the family TV, usually in placed in the living room. Although TV watching was an activity that families engaged in, particularly during dinnertime, when the family might sit down to a meal together, TV programs would often spur on dinner table conversations rather than stymie them. However, watching foreign TV programs with family members could be challenging at times, as described by Reema in the quote below.

- Reema: Like with family, if there is a bad word they will all look at you like you did something wrong. And the sex scenes and stuff it is just bad, it is so awkward
- Marissa: Really? Can you tell me an instance?
- Reema: I was watching a movie there was this girl, the girl was on TV and they didn't blur it out. I think it was Sony Pix or something. Mom was sitting there and she looked at me. She asked me, "What are you watching? Please change the channel." I didn't know. I said, "I want to watch it." The movie was pretty interesting and there was just that one part and she was asking me to change and I didn't like it. My brother keeps closing his eyes.

Watching foreign TV shows often meant that topics such as sex that continue to be taboo within the context of the family setting would make an appearance of the screen, leading to awkwardness. In Reema's case, her mother asked her to turn off the TV, ostensibly to protect her little brother from being exposed to sexually explicit content, but such monitoring of participants' TV viewing was not uncommon, and more often than not, parents admonished young women viewing Western programming if they felt it was a source of sexually explicit content. Nina discussed this aspect of parental monitoring of media content by explaining that her mother would periodically check on her to make sure she was not seeing anything "wrong" even when she was watching TV

alone in the living room. Not all participants reported such extreme surveillance of their TV viewing, but when TV was being watched in the presence of other family members, parental surveillance was common. Moreover, when TV was being watched as a family, parental viewing choices prevailed. These were usually Hindi programs, which parents viewed as more “family-oriented” and were typically Hindi sitcoms or soaps operas.

Vanessa: Between *Jhalak* and *Dancing* I guess I will see *Jhalak*  
Marissa: Okay, how come?  
Vanessa: Because I am used to seeing that. I told you mom rules with the remote

Marissa: What do you watch as a family?  
Nina: When mama and dada are watching these funny serials. There is this thing that comes on SAB TV, that *Tarak Mehta*.  
Marissa: Oh, okay. *Chashma*... something like that  
Nina: Yeah. *Tarak Mehta ka Ulta Chasma*. So it is this funny thing that they love watching. They laugh. So that is when we watch TV together.

In general, TV viewing was a family activity rather than an activity engaged with friends. Some participants reported watching Hindi soaps with parents, particularly their mothers and older relatives.

Zara: My favorite TV show is *Friends*. I don't watch that much of TV anymore but when I used to it used to be Star World and it used to be most of the sitcoms  
Marissa: So do you watch anything else?  
Zara: *Pavitra Rishta* from Zee. Yeah, I used to watch that.  
Marissa: You used to watch it?  
Zara: Yeah, on and off but not regularly. I watch it generally because my grandma used to watch it and I developed a liking for it from watching it. Not very regularly  
Marissa: So you watch both Hindi and English (TV)?

Reema: Only English. Hindi only some. All those ‘saas bahu’ programs are too weird. My mom watches it and I watch it with her and I laugh because they are damn funny

Jasmine: I like *Madhubala*. That is again because I have seen these nuts watching. I see like my family watching and talk about the story and I am like, “Okay, it is interesting.” The interesting story has gone for 4 episodes. Now I am going back to English TV. That is what usually happens.

When the viewing of Hindi TV shows is juxtaposed with their otherwise poor opinion of these Hindi programs, it becomes clear that the reason for watching these media was to maintain family relationships. Although participants found the content of the soaps irrelevant, watching soaps provided opportunities to interact with families. Western programs that participants enjoyed did not offer these opportunities. Consequently, TV viewing was not only a family activity but it also involved viewing Hindi programs.

Although the role of TV as family hearth has been pointed out by Lynn Spiegel (1992), more recent studies show that media consumption is becoming increasingly private (Livingstone, 2007) and causing a loss in intimacy (Turkle, 2012). In the case of my participants also, much of their media consumption was private through laptops or mobile phones; however, this did not mean that family viewing was replaced or absent. This example of TV viewing in family contexts underlines another point that participants repeatedly made when distinguishing themselves from Western youth: that Indian youth are invested in family ties. Such investment in family time was seen as essential and framed as a mark of Indian culture. For these women, modernity did not mean a break from family ties.

Vanessa: To me Indianness means all about being in a family. It is about being together. It teaches you to be with your parents, your friends, to keep things like not to just break apart. Like when you have something it is for keeps that is what being an Indian means to me.

The emphasis on maintaining family ties reveals another facet of Indian modernity—valuing relationships. Both family relationships and friendships were as viewed as intimate and enduring and viewing Hindi media provided an opportunity to cultivate these ties.

While Hindi TV soaps helped strengthen family ties, watching movies in theatres helped strengthen ties with Catholic and non-Catholic friends. Amelia made the point as follows:

Amelia: Do you prefer Hindi movies to English movies even now?  
Interviewee: No, it is not. See, it is like basically what happens is your friends' circle. Initially my friends' circle back in college was, even when I was studying my MBA was more of non-Catholics. So they tend to watch more of Hindi movies.  
Marissa: Okay...  
Amelia: So I used to watch a lot of Hindi movies but I used to balance it by watching English serials.  
Jasmine: Movies I do watch. So on Sundays I will go for a movie with friends. Whatever is running. Like whether it is good or not, it is just one outing which I need to do. So if I can squeeze in a movie I would

In general, participants would go for movies, either English or Hindi, with friends or family. Going to the movies alone almost never happened. In this way, watching movies in the theatre becomes a community-building practice. This practice aligns with other movie-going performances such standing while the national anthem

plays at the start of movies,<sup>45</sup> an explicit way in which the state constructs the movie theatre as a site for building a national identity. The salience of movies in building community is not limited to theatres. While television consumption patterns across religious communities and generations might differ, Hindi movies in particular, allowed Catholic women to develop a cultural repertoire that transcended these age and religious differences. I saw this phenomenon in practice as I traveled in the local trains and saw female college students, both Catholic and non-Catholic, play *antakshari*. *Antakshari* is a popular game among Mumbaikars and involves one person or team singing a Bollywood song and the opposing person/team starting a new Bollywood song with the last syllable of the previous song. At parties I attended, “dumb charades” (as charades are called in India) was a popular across age groups with youth and older family members participating enthusiastically in guessing the names of Bollywood movies. The popularity of *antakshari* and dumb charades in group settings and the fact that participating in these games needed an extensive knowledge of Bollywood movies, shows the myriad ways in which movie-watching intersects with community building in the lives of Catholic women.

### **Consuming hybridity**

Unlike the negative evaluations for Hindi TV programs, participants were much more appreciative of Hindi movies. One reason for this difference in evaluation might be that participants saw the two types of media as very different.

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<sup>45</sup> Started in 2003 in Mumbai to promote national unity.

- Amanda: Yeah, I love Bollywood. I love watching Hindi films. I don't know I find it is different from regular Hindi TV
- Marissa: Okay, so what are the differences between the two?
- Amanda: I think currently what is going on in TV is homely problems and how they solve it, how one person in the family is totally amazing like the *bahu* (daughter-in-law). She is totally amazing and she can fix everybody's problems. It is too black and white. You are a bad person. It is not like that in real life. You know it is okay, some people have their bad sides at different times.

Amanda appreciated the complexity in Bollywood movies that she found lacking in Hindi TV. As mentioned earlier, Hindi TV soaps are centered around the home and characters are portrayed as extremely traditional; even the ways in which they are categorized colloquially as *saas-bahu* soaps emphasizes this homogenization of content. In contrast, Bollywood offers a mix of stories. The stories are often formulaic, but there remains a repertoire of narratives that are available in Bollywood. Further, participants such as Reema also saw Bollywood as more progressive in comparison to Hindi TV soaps.

- Reema: Yeah, movies are little different. Movies are much different than the programs
- Marissa: What are the differences that you see in the movies?
- Reema: Indian movies are like the girl is a little open. She can do what she wants. But in the program she is all caught up in the little place in the house serving her husband and stuff like that.

Reema highlights the progressive characterization of Indian women in Bollywood as compared with on Indian TV. One way in which female characters are offered more complexity is that in more recent times, female protagonists in Bollywood movies transcend the vamp/virgin dichotomy that was popular among older Hindi movies (Govidan & Dutta, 2008). In other ways also, Bollywood has been at the

forefront of defining Indianness in terms of modernity. Scholars have noted how contemporary Bollywood has helped foster a sense of transnational citizenship among the Indian diaspora by acknowledging the impact of migration on Indians through movies that focus on the experiences of diasporic Indians (Punathmabekar, 2005). These movies emphasize traditions, family values, love, and nationalism even while acknowledging how globalization has reconfigured these aspects of Indian culture. In addition, within Bollywood, the Hindi used is typically less formal than that used in Hindi TV soaps. Further, Hinglish is often used, which might aid with understanding for participants who were not very fluent in Hindi. Thus, by embedding local realities in global contexts, Bollywood epitomizes and celebrates the cultural hybridity of modern India.

Bollywood has also enjoyed increasing visibility beyond India as a result of improved distribution mechanisms, appreciation of Bollywood icons such as Aishwarya Rai and A.R. Rehman in the West, and appeal of Bollywood movies beyond national borders. This “contra-flow” (Thussu, 2006, p. 176) is a result of “a new kind of (Indian) cinema, a hybrid cultural product that fuses the language of Hollywood with the accent, slang, and emotions of India.” (Thussu, 2008, p. 114). Further evidence of such hybridity was found by Schaefer & Karan (2010) in their content analysis that compared 61 Bollywood movies released between 1947 and 2007. They found that in movies released after liberalization there was a significant increase in the “levels of Western (86%–92%) and modern (83%–89%) content (e.g. Western-style attire, holidays and sports; contemporary technology, weaponry, motorized transportation, and the like) and a



significant decrease in Eastern/Indian (91%–85%) and traditional (43%–29%) content (e.g. Indian attire, religious practices and holidays; rural lifestyles; and non-motorized transport).”

For the most part, participants responded to this formulation of hybridity favorably by pointing out that Bollywood offered “the full entertainment package.” For participants trying to negotiate between modernity and tradition, Bollywood becomes a point of identification by presenting them with a formulation of Indian modernity that emphasizes cultural hybridity.

However, even as cultural hybridity is celebrated in Bollywood movies, representation of minority religious communities continues to be problematic. Chadha and Kavoori (2008) point out that within the narratives of Bollywood, Muslims continue to represent the exotic Other and participants often discussed the problematic representation of Christians in Bollywood movies. However, for the most part, participants were voracious consumers of Bollywood movies and reported enjoying them, at times even more than Hollywood movies. One reason for this enjoyment, despite the negative stereotyping of the Catholic community might be that participants viewed Bollywood mainly as entertainment rather than serious cinema. That is, Bollywood’s main purpose was to entertain and the outlandish nature of the content was readily acknowledged. Multiple participants said that when viewing Bollywood it was important to “leave your brains behind” to point out that logic was not to be expected of Bollywood movies. Instead, the movies were “time-pass” and offered an escape from the stresses of everyday life.

Katy: Bollywood is I feel pure entertainment. It is unrealistic no doubt but if you go to see for entertainment level where you are actually stressed out in life and you want something to laugh about you have to watch a Bollywood movie because there is dance, there is drama, there is caring people and there is tenderness. All happy endings and you know something like that.

Katy's quote points out that elements associated with Indian tradition such as valuing relationships, dance, and drama are incorporated into Bollywood, while other participants pointed out that Bollywood had complex, progressive characters and narratives. Thus, participants seemed to appreciate Bollywood because it was a mixture of the best of Western modernity and Indian tradition, without overemphasizing either. That Bollywood movies that copied Hollywood movies were evaluated poorly emphasizes the salience of Bollywood's hybrid nature for Catholic women. By responding favorably to the cultural hybridity of contemporary Bollywood, young Catholic women's responses closely mirror those of Maronite youth in Lebanon, who also define their identities in terms of cultural hybridity and valued media texts that showcased cultural hybridity (Kraidy, 1999).

Casting Bollywood as "not serious" cinema was advantageous for Catholic women for two reasons: 1. It allowed them to trivialize and reject the representations of the Catholic community in these movies because the movies were seen as "nautanki"<sup>46</sup> 2. Once the representations of the Catholic community in these movies were rejected, it opened up the opportunity to enjoy these media texts, which was important for these

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<sup>46</sup> Colloquialism for "over-the-top" and overly dramatic

women, given the paucity of Indian media texts that acknowledged or celebrated hybridity.

### **Postscript: hybridity's significance for cultural citizenship**

Hybridity is brought to the forefront in the experience of cultural citizenship for those living in the margins (in this case, religious minority communities). I started this chapter by claiming that media consumption, globalization, and modernity are entangled in developing a culture of citizenship. As the analysis shows, hybridity and cultural capital are useful heuristics for understanding the power relations permeate the media consumption practices and patterns of Catholic women in modern India and how these practices facilitate the attainment of cultural citizenship.

The mixing of the global and the local to constitute national culture is a characteristic of modern India. Cultural hybridity refers to this mixing and enjoying media texts such as Bollywood that celebrate such hybridity becomes a way of demonstrating cultural citizenship.

Although cultural hybridity is discussed in celebratory tones in this chapter, it is not a resource in all contexts. In many cases, hybridity is a sign of transgression—of mixings that are outside of the norm. Even in India, during the freedom struggle, locality was emphasized in Gandhi's Swadeshi movement and consuming foreign goods was seen as betraying the national cause. Thus, cultural hybridity was not a resource for accessing cultural citizenship at the time. However, following liberalization of the Indian economy, there is a renewed consciousness about India's need to maintain its relevance in global society. English proficiency, which made its way into Indian society as a result

of colonial rule, today presents Indian citizens with an advantage in the context of engaging with global capital. Thus, a colonial legacy moves from being something to be discarded to an advantage that is embraced.

For Catholics, colonialism is an integral part of their religious history and is the root cause for why they are not seen as Indian enough. That is, their religion is seen as a colonial legacy. However, the legacies of colonialism that led to the marginalization of Catholics has now become a sifting discourse, a resource at times and a cause for cultural marginalization other times. The significance of cultural hybridity in cultural citizenship rests in this shifting, oscillating nature of the salience of colonial legacies (between transgression and resource).

Such discursive oscillations show that “Indianness” is not a static concept and therefore conceptualizations of cultural citizenship are also not static. They are context bound and depend on the nature of links that India forges between the global and local. This shifting nature of colonial legacies shows that cultural citizenship is a precarious form of citizenship. It is not a state that can be achieved but one that is always in the process of being achieved because the ways in which it is being constituted are constantly being reworked.

This analysis of media consumption of young Catholic women, which is a mix of foreign and local media, I show how media consumption is a productive site for understanding how hybridity is constituted and becomes a resource for these women, who are typically seen as not Indian enough, for articulating cultural citizenship in terms of modernity.

Young Catholic women constitute this hybridity in a variety of ways. The discussion of language preferences ties religious identity with postcolonial subjectivity and cultural capital. The rejection of the content of Hindi TV programs that present a limited view of citizenship by emphasizing Indian traditions demonstrates that these women perceive hybridity as an essential component of Indian modernity. Hybridity becomes a resource for these women to explain their viewing of Hindi soap operas despite disliking the content (their value for family relationships means that they watch they show with family members even if they dislike the content). Finally, their enjoyment of Bollywood movies, which fuse global and local culture, and are a major Indian cultural export, shows how cultural hybridity is a valued national identity. Through their varied media consumption patterns and practices, young Catholic women develop their cultural hybridity by selectively engaging with Western and Indian elements from within global mediascapes that act as ‘large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnocscapes’ (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35).

In this chapter, I have shown that participants emphasized hybridity in their media consumption and that hybridity is a central feature of the cultural citizenship embodied by young Catholic women. However, the significance of hybridity as a feature of cultural citizenship lies in understanding *how* hybridity has become a central feature for claiming cultural citizenship.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As I wrap up this dissertation about the salience of religious affiliation in discussions of national belonging (cultural citizenship) and how media practices are central in claiming cultural citizenship, India has just finished voting in the general national elections.

Indian citizens, sold on the idea of progress and modernization and tired of bureaucracy, corruption, and dynastic politics, voted out the political party in power and voted in another party—a party that has long been associated with divisive politics based on religion and plagued by allegations of inciting violence in the name of religion. However, for a citizenry tired of hearing the empty promises of politicians and struggling to make ends meet in the face of seemingly uncontrollable inflation, issues of minority rights and secularism were reduced to discourses of exploitation in the days leading up to the elections—Today, minority rights and secularism are considered excuses used to deny resources to “hard-working” Indians and justifications to promote sectarian interests in lieu of national progress.

As election day drew nearer, I monitored the news on national newspapers and watched secularism devolve into a dirty word; I saw identity politics play out on my Facebook wall as fellow citizens argued that claiming any identity other than Indian was a denial of progress; and I observed the few lone voices that urged citizens to be cautious about the narrative of unflinching progress get swallowed by the din of modern nationalism. As the loudest and perhaps most persuasive voices persisted in redefining

“Indianness” in terms of rationality, progress, and modernity, arguments about culture, gender, or caste and class rights were silenced, and this dissertation’s main goal—answering what it means to be Indian for those who live on the margins of national culture—seemed to take on a new urgency.

The majority voted based on what was best for “India,” and Indianness emerged as a privileged identity that superseded all others.

In this dissertation, I explore the cultural practices involved in claiming this Indianness. In other words, I explore the potential of cultural practices for being resources in constituting and practicing cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship seeks to understand that part of citizenship that goes beyond having the right to vote and the opportunity to participate in national politics. Rather, it conceptualizes citizenship in terms of a sense of belonging and seeks to understand how non-dominant groups in a culture are often marginalized in cultural terms. Cultural marginalization can impact political participation because those who feel like they do not belong to national culture might not be motivated to participate in a country’s political processes. Therefore, understanding cultural citizenship as a lived experience is necessary for ensuring a robust democracy.

To explore this concept of cultural citizenship in the context of India, I focus on how Indianness is constituted through the specific cultural practices of groups that are at the margins of nation culture or groups that are considered “not Indian enough” even if they are citizens in the sense of possessing voting rights. The specific cultural practices I

studied were media practices and the cultural group I focused on was young Catholic women.

I chose to study this cultural group for specific reasons: To write about what it means to be Indian for India's youth has political implications—it provides a glimpse into what is valued by the nation's future leaders. To explore how women participate in citizenship processes is important—it provides an understanding of the spaces wherein Indian women continue to struggle for equal rights and the ways in which they protest their treatment as second-class citizens through everyday practices. To understand how minority groups embrace “Indianness” even when they are typically considered not Indian enough is required—it helps decipher the enduring allure of “Indianness” and the characteristics that constitute it. In this way by focusing on the lives of young women who belong to a religious minority group in India provided me a glimpse into how multiple identities and cultural affiliations intersect to shape the quality of Indianness they experience and aspire to embody. As my analysis has shown, young Catholic women's experience of belonging or cultural citizenship is shaped by multiple identities—their identities are youth, as women, and as Catholics. That is, they experience citizenship in cultural terms and not just political terms. In this way, by focusing on how identities and cultures matter in the experience and practice of citizenship, this dissertation uses an intersectional approach to uncover the lived experience of cultural citizenship for those that are culturally marginalized. From my analysis, modernity appeared to be central to the experience and practice of cultural citizenship for young Catholic women.



Since I wanted to understand how cultural citizenship is conceptualized and practiced—that is, how it is communicated—I chose to focus on media practices because they are both cultural and communicative. Research abounds on how media narratives are important in creating a sense of belonging and how people’s engagement with media is informed by factors ranging from historical contexts to identity categories. For example, media researchers who study diasporic groups have repeatedly stressed the links between media practices and the sense of belonging enjoyed by diasporic groups. In many instances, however, groups that are not considered diasporas might still struggle with their sense of belonging if they are culturally different from dominant groups. However, the ways in which media practices allow these culturally marginal groups to negotiate their sense of belonging remains understudied.

Connecting media practices with issues of culture has an additional benefit: it keeps the focus on what the practice communicates rather than the practice itself. For example, I was not interested to learn that young Catholic women are engaged in mobile phone photography; rather, my interest in the practice was rooted in the importance that mobile phone photography had for participants and what the photos that were taken using a mobile phone camera were being used to communicate.

As stated earlier, I was interested in understanding cultural citizenship as a lived experience, and therefore, ethnographic approaches were best suited to explore to answer my research questions. Ethnographic methods push researchers to uncover the cultural significance of what is mundane and everyday and this goal is achieved through participating in, observing, and probing everyday experiences. My ethnographic work

focused on exploring the cultural significance of media practices—media practices I analyzed were mobile phone practices, including photography, texting, and calling, and media consumption practices (specifically viewing TV programs and movies).

In this dissertation, I examined the aforementioned media practices of young Catholic women in urban India with the goal of understanding how these media practices function as a way of claiming cultural citizenship. I found that the media practices of my participants were connected to expressing Indian modernity. Therefore, I argue that given that modernity is privileged in India today, media practices connected to modernity are a way of claiming cultural citizenship. Through these media practices, participants attempted to displace the link between Indianness and Hindu culture and show that Catholic culture can also reflect Indianness, when Indianness is defined in terms of being modern.

However, modernity is a slippery concept, given that it is unevenly experienced in different parts of the world and by different cultural groups. The media practices of my participants reflected this unevenness by showing how Indian modernity is gendered and simultaneously similar to and different from Western conceptualizations of modernity. In this context, the interconnections between global, local, and national cultures become important, and in the section that follows, I summarize these interconnections by mapping them onto the various media practices that were analyzed.

### **Summary of findings**

Catholics comprise 1.6% of India's 1.2 billion population (Allen Jr., 2009). Perhaps the lives of Catholic youth in India have not been studied so far because of the

politics involved in studying a religious minority community that in the not so distant past had ties to colonizers and even today, continues to be linked with the conversion doctrine espoused by missionaries. Because Christianity is viewed as a foreign religion and since the Hindu religion and nation remain tightly linked in the Indian imagination (D'Silva, 2005), Catholics, whose ancestors may have converted (or been converted) to Catholicism decades ago, are coded as foreign in popular discourses such as those of popular Indian media. In these discourses, the culture of Catholics is often marked as Western (or non-Indian), despite the traditions being a blend of indigenous and European traditions (Andrews, 2010).

Young Catholic women occupy an interesting position within this cultural discourse of Catholics as “not Indian enough.” These women not only inherit the legacies of Christian colonialism but also live within multiple patriarchal cultures: that of the Catholic Church and of mainstream Indian society. Thus, local politics of gender and religion shape their understanding of their own identities and how they relate to national culture.

Ethnographic methods were used to examine the media practices of 30 young, mostly middle-class, Catholic women in Mumbai in order to explore how their media engagement reflect tensions related to claiming belonging to national culture. These tensions are related to the impact of local politics and globalization [in particular, the cultural dimension of globalization which Appadurai (1996) terms “modernity,”] on national culture.

The media practices examined were photography, safety, and privacy practices that were enacted using the mobile phone and the media consumption of popular media, including television programs and movies. Rather than examining media practices associated with a single platform, I examined media practices occurring across multiple platforms. The reasons for this choice were as follows: Mobile phones, televisions, and movie theatres dominate the media landscape in India. These platforms also dominate the media environment of my participants. In an age of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006), when media circulate across various platforms and people make connections between different media, across platforms, a study that reflects the connections between “old” and “new” media is both timely and needed. Although the bulk of my data is from interviews and fieldwork observations, part of my analysis also examines media artifacts such as mobile phones that are designed for women, popular mobile phone commercials, and publicly available photos posted by participants on social media.

In this dissertation, I used intersectionality and hybridity to theorize cultural citizenship. Intersectionality allowed me to see how religious identities and gender identity both inform the practice of modernity and the type of modernity that is considered acceptable for young Catholic women. Hybridity allows me to theorize how the blend of Western and Indian elements in Catholic culture is a part of larger power networks that mark globalization’s relationship with postcolonial societies. Thus, hybridity and intersectionality foreground the analyses presented in each chapter.

Throughout, I tried to show how the media practices of my participants both reflected social structures and were constituted by them. That is, I conceptualize media

practices as primarily cultural practices that can help understand the connections between the micro and macro elements of everyday life. Given that intersectionality and hybridity explain how individual and /or cultural groups relate to their social worlds, they were useful for theorizing media practices in cultural terms.

In Ch. III, I focused on photography practices and connected these to practices of cultural citizenship. The prevalence of mobile phone photography revealed both the emphasis on self-presentation and the type of self-presentation that was seen as desirable. I found that young Catholic women in Mumbai used mobile phone cameras to capture and share moments that showcased their mobility, consumer power, and understanding of modern aesthetics. These themes reflect how Catholic women understand Indian modernity and how they see themselves as embodying and expressing the identity of “modern Indian woman.” Notably, being a modern Indian woman is important is valuable because it affords these women with a sense of belonging to India, a nation that since the 1990s has focused on positioning itself a modern, global player. Thus, being a modern Indian woman becomes a path to cultural citizenship.

The emphasis on mobility, consumption, and modern aesthesis revealed that conceptualizations of desired modernity involved Western elements, although mobility and consumption encompassed consuming both Western and Indian cultural commodities and traveling in both international and local spaces. There was a simultaneous emphasis on expressing Indian cultural traditions, particularly the Indian elements of Catholic culture, showing that Indian modernity as showcased by participants did not involve a complete break from tradition. Participants’ connected

their freedom of movement and ability to appreciate global culture as a cultural literacy or capital afforded by Catholic culture. However, by showcasing local traditions they also rejected popular discourses that characterized Catholic culture in India as overly Western disconnected from local traditions. In this way, the experience of cultural citizenship for young Catholic women involves living out a contradiction: the colonial roots of their Catholic culture positions them as “not Indian enough” but the blend of foreign and local elements that characterize contemporary Catholic culture also affords them cultural literacies to navigate a globalizing Indian society that seeks to showcase its competence and relevance in global society while still remaining grounded in local traditions and values. Thus, Catholic culture both impeded and enriched participants’ experience of cultural citizenship (which emphasizes being a modern Indian woman). In this context, mobile phone photography becomes a way to showcase how this contradiction is navigated and managed—specifically, by emphasizing the connections between Catholic culture and a contemporary Indian conceptualization of modernity.

The focus on consumption and mobility also highlights the gendered and classed nature of Indian modernity. Any privileging of a consumer lifestyle is obviously a classed assessment, being that it presupposes economic capital. Among my participants, not all had similar consumer power. However, because showcasing engagement with global and local culture involved dressing, accessorizing, and traveling, participants adopted strategies such as buying knock-offs and ensuring that any and all travels were prominently displayed. Further, drawing on Bourdieu’s (1986) analysis of taste and distinction, I point out that the emphasis on aesthetics is at its core a practice via which

class is displayed and constituted. As mentioned earlier, modernity is also a gendered experience and the media practices that highlight this aspect were explored in Chapter IV.

Although accessing cultural citizenship is a goal for those seeking to find their place in national culture, becoming citizens in the cultural sense involves managing risks. That is, when cultural citizenship for young Catholic women in India is conceptualized in terms of emphasizing the qualities of a modern Indian woman, privacy and safety emerged as risks that modern Indian women must manage competently.

Chapter IV explored these tensions between modernity, safety, and privacy in the lives of Catholic women, the communication technologies available to manage these concerns, and the ways in which communication technologies were used to manage privacy and safety—on-going struggles for all modern Indian women. If the photography practices discussed in the previous chapter maintain the gloss of modernity, in this chapter I explore the “behind the scenes” practices and the ways in which being modern can also be a risk. In particular, the use of the mobile phone for safety showed how being mobile, an often celebrated aspect of modernity, was a gendered experience. I arrived at this conclusion by focusing on the various threats, my participants faced while mobile. In this regard, mobile phones were used innovative ways by participants to keep themselves safe. However, practices such as keeping in touch with friends and family, meant that privacy was hard to come by.

Being private meant managing tensions between surveillance and staying safe, but also finding spaces to express sexuality, which was discouraged by patriarchal norms in

Catholic culture and Indian society. Thus, although my participants could have romantic relationships, parents used surveillance strategies to ensure that these relationships were not sexual. Mobile phone practices such as sexting allowed participants to subvert, although not completely displace these patriarchal norms. Keeping expressions of sexuality private and privileging sexual abstinence by preferring virtual intimacy to physical intimacy had further advantages in that it allowed Catholic women to challenge popular discourses of Catholic women as morally bankrupt and hypersexual. In this way, their media practices revealed that participants tried to conform to the cultural ideal of modern Indian woman—a woman who is well-educated, financially independent, and fashionable, but not overtly sexual. Thus, participants embodied a gendered Indian modernity, which was reflected in their uses of the mobile phone for safety and privacy. Internalization of the patriarchal gender norms of the Catholic Church meant that they conformed to the gendered norms of Indian modernity.

Chapter V built on the idea that modernity reifies hybridity by focusing on how my participants' media consumption patterns and practices blended Western and Indian cultural elements. Thus, this chapter delineates another facet of cultural citizenship for young Catholic women: an embracing of hybridity. In general, the young Catholic women who participated in this study enjoyed Western television programs and disliked Hindi TV programs. However, although they did not enjoy Hindi TV programs, many enjoyed Hindi movies.

Participants' preferences for English media were theorized through the lenses of both cultural proximity and cultural capital. The preference for English media was



connected with the colonial history of the Catholic community in India; the rise of English as a prestige language in postcolonial, modernizing India; and the pressure on developing global competencies in order to show allegiance to India's vision of being a global player. Cultural proximity was used to theorize the ways in which the consumption of foreign programs allowed for a proximity to modernity and a way to learn about modernity. The rejection of some elements of foreign programming showed that consumption of foreign media was not passive but involved active evaluations about the salience and value of a Western conceptualization of modernity in the Indian context.

That Hindi TV programs were consumed in family settings despite participants' critiquing the content of these programs reflected that community-building and relationship-maintenance aspects that continue to be valued by Catholic women, and that these aspects were used by Catholic women to distinguish their modernity from Western modernity. In this way, community-building and relationship-maintenance were seen as an important dimension of Indian modernity. Although the media consumption patterns might suggest that the "West" is associated with modernity and "tradition" is associated with "Indianness," and thus suggests that binaries of West/East and modernity/tradition are reinscribed by these practices, participant's appreciation of Bollywood for its blending of Western and Indian cultural elements confirmed that Indian modernity is not about binaries but about hybridity.

In this way, the focus on the media consumption of participants revealed that Indian modernity is privileged because it encompasses participation in global culture without compromising belonging to nation. However, for Catholic women, it involves a

continual negotiation of ensuring that they are not too Western or too Indian because faulting on either side could mean a failure at being appropriately modern within the Indian context. Thus, for my participants, modernity and hybridity become integral to their experience of cultural citizenship.

To summarize, to study cultural citizenship is to acknowledge that a cultural group might have political rights but these rights do not automatically mean respect for or an embrace of their culture in society. As I have shown in this analysis, modernity is central to participants' experiences with claiming cultural citizenship. One of the ways in which these claims for cultural citizenship are made is through the media practices discussed in this dissertation. Participants' media practices revealed that they privileged and expressed Indian modernity despite its gendered and classed aspects. Their experience with Indian modernity required them embody or strive to embody a national identity (that of the modern India woman) that requires them to appreciate, understand, and participate in global culture and capital without ignoring local politics of gender and religion. If modernity was a privileged cultural ideal that upper-caste, Hindu women were considered to embody and express competently, Catholic women's consumption practices show that they consider their Catholic culture as providing them with the cultural capital needed to embody this modernity. Thus, they claim cultural citizenship and express belonging by expressing Indian modernity. To clarify, my argument is not that Catholic women in Mumbai are *the* subjects of modern Indian womanhood, but that they are *also* appropriate subjects of this privileged identity. This process of claiming cultural citizenship in terms of modernity highlights an on-going struggle of postcolonial

subjects: the struggle to simultaneously live with and move past colonial histories in world where colonial powers and Eurocentrism continue to maintain their dominance.

### **Contributions**

This dissertation makes theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contributions and fills a gap in existing scholarship about India and global media studies.

By developing and accepting cultural citizenship as a valuable concept, researchers have acknowledged that cultural concerns matter in discussions of citizenship and that culture matters even in the context of political citizenship. For example, concerns regarding loss of cultural homogeneity that are often at play in discussions about immigration show that fears about cultural differences can be used to deny political citizenship. However, although cultural citizenship's usefulness is acknowledged, the processes via which those who are culturally marginalized attempt to access cultural citizenship remains understudied.

The need to study cultural citizenship as a process and a lived experience goes beyond filling a gap in the literature. It is needed because cultural citizenship in its current conceptualization refers to an idealized form of citizenship but does not take into account how this idealized form of cultural respect can be accessed and the negotiations, compromises, and struggles that occur during the process. That is, by focusing on the lived experience of culturally marginalized citizens who attempt to access cultural citizenship through their media practices, this dissertation pushes for understanding cultural citizenship in less abstract terms. Understanding how a concept is lived out “on the ground” is needed to theorize it better and understand the contextual reasons

undergirding differential constitutions of the concept without slipping into sloppy relativism.

By connecting media practices related to Indian modernity with cultural citizenship, this dissertation elaborates theories of cultural citizenship in a new context—postcolonial nations. For postcolonial nations, national culture has been important in maintaining unity and mobilizing for political action. However, it has also had a homogenizing influence with national culture being equated with the culture of dominant groups. The resultant cultural hegemony has meant that minority cultures are often marginalized or disparaged. Under the pressure of globalization, cultural hegemony has become a site for right-wing groups to link nationalism to nativism; this linking is what is contested by the idea of cultural citizenship. By focusing on the culture of a marginal group located at the fringes of national culture, Catholics in Mumbai, this dissertation highlights how global and local politics interact in constituting and contesting national culture.

Second, this dissertation also focuses on the media practices of postcolonial subjects to highlight how these practices showcase an enduring contradiction that constitutes postcolonial subjectivity: media practices reflect how colonial history helps young Catholic women navigate contemporary national culture (for example, proficiency with English, a legacy of colonialism, helps Catholic women enjoy American television) even while their cultural marginalization stems from being associated with the religion of colonizers.

Third, the identity of “modern Indian woman” emerges as a privileged identity in globalizing India, and this dissertation contributes to the literature on the conceptualization of this identity by focusing on how media practices are involved in showcasing, maintaining, and learning this identity. The analysis revealed that hybridity is an enduring feature of modernity in the context of postcolonial India, and the potential that this formulation has for Catholic women who often feel caught between global and local cultures. Further, the media practices also revealed that Indian modernity can be a double-edged sword by emphasizing the gendered and classed dimensions of this modernity. In this way, I deepen our understanding of the lived experience of modernity and its unevenness by connecting it to media practices.

Fourth, by connecting media practices with discourses about globalization and nationalism I show ethnography’s usefulness for using micro contexts to deepen our understanding of macro contexts. I also show ethnography’s continuing relevance for delineating complex connections between how groups and individual experience, accept, or challenge marginalizing discourses. That is, this dissertation adds to the literature on the use of ethnographic work to study power relations in societies and how individuals are embedded in these relations.

Finally, this study also fills gaps in various literatures. First, by highlighting the experience of young women, I distance myself from the homogeneity embedded in discussing “youth” in primarily masculine terms. This dissertation also contributes to transnational feminist media studies by seeking to understand how transnational processes such as globalization are unevenly experienced by women in the Third World

and in doing so, I disrupt the image of “Third-World” women as anti-modern, passive, and victimized. By showing how media practices are inflected by religious, gender, and class identities, I add to literature on intersectionality by showing the intersections of religious identity and gender identity. Finally, by discussing the experience of Catholic women, I fill a gap in postcolonial scholarship, which despite acknowledging the enduring salience of religion in postcolonial societies and persistently arguing against homogenizing understandings of these societies, continues to overlook the experiences of postcolonial subjects belonging to minority religions.

Of course, Catholics are not the only minority religious community in India, and although modernity might be the way via which young Catholic women gain cultural citizenship, this might not be the case for women of other religious communities such as Muslims and Sikhs. Thus, the findings of this study apply to only a specific community and could be strengthened by future studies that explore cultural citizenship in other minority religious communities. Moreover, even within the Catholic community in India there are rigid social hierarchies: Dalit-Catholics, for example, continue to face physical violence because of their religious commitments and their experiences are rarely discussed or find representation. This dissertation is limited in that it does not explore these internal hierarchies within the Catholic community. Finally, similar to Catholic women, Catholic men also face the pressure of negative stereotyping (for example, in Hindi movies, Catholic men often portrayed as lazy, poor, and alcoholics.) Exploring how young men negotiate claims for cultural citizenship through their media practices

could further help uncover the gendered nature of Indian modernity and refine our understanding of how gender shapes the process of accessing cultural citizenship.

In conclusion, this dissertation has theorized that the media practices of young Catholic women in urban India are entwined in discourses of Indian modernity. Further, the media practices of young Catholic women also reveal Indian modernity can be gendered and classed. However, the identity of “modern Indian woman” is still privileged in the media practices of young Catholic women because of its potential for creating a space for cultural citizenship. Thus, this dissertation concludes that media practices are also cultural practices of citizenship. Given that modernity reinscribes unequal power relations, mobilizing it to access cultural citizenship can be viewed as compromise or capitulation. Perhaps the way forward lies in acknowledging its limitations and seeing it as a first rather than final step in the path to cultural citizenship.

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APPENDIX 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Relationship status</b>	<b>Living arrangements</b>	<b>Language proficiency</b>
May 25	Katy	Home, Malad	19	Bachelor's	Student	Single	Parents and sibling	English
May 20	Tania	Home, Malad	22	Master's	Unemployed	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English
May 28	Nina	Friend's home, Malad	20	Bachelor's	Student	In a relationship	Parents and siblings	English, Konkani, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
May 31	Janet	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	22	Bachelor's	Office manager	Single	Parents and siblings	English, Hindi (limited), Marathi (limited)
May 31	Reema	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	20	Bachelor's	Student	In a relationship	Parents and siblings	English
June 1	Maria	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	20	Bachelor's	Student, part-time jobs	Single	Parents and siblings	English
June 6	Rachita	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	22	Bachelor's	Public relations	In a relationship	Parents and siblings	English and Hindi
June 6	Monica	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	19	Professional degreee	Student	In a relationship	Parents and siblings	English, Hindi (limited), Marathi (limited)

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Relationship status</b>	<b>Living arrangements</b>	<b>Language proficiency</b>
June 8	Amelia	Café Coffee Day, Malad	25	Master's	Marketing executive	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	Hindi and English
June 15	Natasha	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	20	Bachelor's	Film-maker	Single	Parents and siblings	English, Konkani Hindi, Marathi
June 15	Chriselle	Mocha Mojo, Bandra	20	Bachelor's	Student	Single	Parents	English, Konkani (limited)
July 7	Veronica	Home, Malad	24	Bachelor's	Educator	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English, Hindi, Marathi
July 7	Sonia	Café Coffee Day, Malad	24	Bachelor's	Call center employee	In a relationship	Mother	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
July 16	Cheryl	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	24	Master's	Educator	In a relationship	Mother and sibling	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
July 13	Jasmine	Home, Bandra	25	Master's	Advertising professional	Single	Father	English and Hindi
July 16	Anjali	Mocha Mojo, Bandra	20	Bachelor's	Student	In a relationship	Parents, grandparent, aunt, and siblings	English and Hindi
July 18	Anne	Inorbit mall	22	Master's	Student	Single	Parents and sibling	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited), Konkani (with grandparents)

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Relationship status</b>	<b>Living arrangements</b>	<b>Language proficiency</b>
July 18	Lisa	Inorbit Mall	22	Master's	Unemployed	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English and Hindi
July 20	Sabrina	Café Coffee Day, Mahim	24	Master's	News correspondent	Single	Mother and sibling	English, Hindi, Malayalam, and Marathi
July 20	Sylvia	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	24	Master's	Programs executive at NGO	In a relationship	Mother	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited), Konkani
July 21	Zara	Sun, Moon, and Potatoes, Malad	23	Master's	College lecturer	Single	Parents and grandparent	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
July 27	Priyanka	Mocha Mojo, Bandra	24	Professional degree	CPA	Single	Parents and siblings	English and Hindi
July 27	Tara	Gloria Jean's Coffee, Bandra	24	Professional degree	Lawyer	In a relationship	Parents	English, Hindi (limited) and Marathi (limited)
August 1	Jenny	Mocha Mojo, Bandra	20	Bachelor's	Student	Single	Parents	English, Hindi (limited) and Marathi (limited)
August 1	Blossom	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	24	Bachelor's	Educator	Single	Parents and extended family	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Relationship status</b>	<b>Living arrangements</b>	<b>Language proficiency</b>
August 3	Florence	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	25	Bachelor's	Call center employee	Single	Parents	English, Hindi, Marathi (with grandparents)
August 5	Amanda	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	23	Bachelor's	Entrepreneur (designer)	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
August 6	Reshma	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	23	Master's	Student	Single	Parents and extended family	English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)
July 6	Vanessa	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	23	Masters	Unemployed	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English, Hindi, Konkani (limited)
July 6	Samantha	Starbucks, Infiniti Mall, Malad	24	Bachelor's	Model and actress	In a relationship	Parents and sibling	English, Hindi, Marathi, Konkani

## APPENDIX 2

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### **Part 1. Introduction**

Thank you for speaking with me.

During this interview, you will be asked about questions related to your media exposure and interactions and technology use. The first part deals with general questions about yourself, with a focus on your daily activities, culture, and religious practices. The next part focuses on media that you engage with and perceptions of popular media. The final part focuses on your use of new media and communication technologies such as mobile phones and social media. All information you provide will be kept confidential. You have the option of refusing to answer any question and ending the interview at any time.

In order to maintain your confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used to refer to you in any research report that draws on this interview. What pseudonym would you like me to use?

#### **Part 2. Background Questions**

##### **A. Demographic & general questions**

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you and/or your family lived in Mumbai? Where did u live before?
3. Where do you live? With family? With other friends? Independent apartment?
4. Do you work and/or study?
5. Which languages do you speak in addition to English? In the home?
6. How would you describe yourself?
7. What does your typical day look like?

##### **B. Privacy and freedom**

1. What do you understand by the term privacy?
  - a. Is privacy important to you?
  - b. How do you maintain your privacy?
2. Are there any restrictions on where you can go or what you can do?
  - a. Who places these restrictions?
  - b. Do you comply with these restrictions? Why or why not?
  - c. When do you comply with these restrictions?

### **C. Religion in daily life**

1. How important is religion to you?
    - a. In your personal life?
    - b. In your social life?
    - c. Are you a part of any Catholic/parish organizations?
    - d. Do participate in religious events held in your community?
  2. How would you characterize your relationship with religion?
  3. What is your religious/spiritual philosophy?
    - a. Are there any church teachings that you disagree with? Why?
    - b. Are there any church teachings that you agree with? Why?
    - c. How do you feel about the Church's stance toward the role of women?
    - d. How do you feel about the Church's stance regarding issues related to sexuality?
    - e. Do you participate in the rituals or practices of other religions?
- i. Cultural identity
1. If you had to provide me with a definition about what it means to be Indian, what would that be?
    - a. Do you think others would have similar definitions? How would they differ? In what ways would they be similar?
    - b. What do you consider are positive aspects of Indian culture?
    - c. What do you consider are negative aspects of Indian culture?
  2. If you had to provide me with a definition about Western culture, what would that be?
  3. How would you define "global culture"?
  4. Do you feel you are part of a global culture?
  5. How would you describe your culture?
  6. How similar/dissimilar is your culture to Indian culture? (attitudes toward family, religion, sexuality, money, education, autonomy)
  7. How similar/dissimilar is your culture to Western culture? (attitudes toward family, religion, sexuality, money, education, autonomy)
  8. What do you think are some of the challenges of being a young woman in India?
  9. What does it mean to be a modern Indian woman?
  10. Do you think being a young Catholic woman influences your life? How?
  11. Can you narrate an instance where you felt you had to downplay or emphasize your Catholic identity?

## **Part 3. Media engagement and perceptions**

### **A. Participants as audience**

1. Which is your favorite TV show? Why?
  - a. What kind of TV shows do you not like?

- b. With whom do you view TV? (friends, family, alone)
  - c. Is there any TV show that you are not permitted to watch?
- 2. Do you watch movies?
  - a. Where? With whom?
  - b. What kind of movies do you prefer?
  - c. What kind of movies do you not like?
- 3. Do you have any language preferences in terms of TV shows, movies, and music?
- 4. Do you have any preferences in terms of local versus foreign programs?
- 5. How would you describe Bollywood?
- 6. How would you describe Hollywood?
- 7. Are there differences in viewing TV/movies with family and friends? Who controls the remote?
- 8. Can you describe a conversation you had with a friend regarding a TV show or movie you watched?
- 9. Do you think religion is an important part of Indian shows/movies/music?
  - a. How are Catholics portrayed in Indian media? How are Catholic women portrayed in Indian media?
  - b. How are other religions portrayed in Indian media?
- 10. Can you relate to (or identify with) these portrayals? Do you think other young Catholic women can relate to these portrayals?
- 11. Can you think of an experience in your life where people thought of you or other Catholic women in this way (like the portrayals)?
- 12. What would be an ideal portrayal of young Catholic women?

## **B. Participants as users**

- i. Mobile phones
  - 1. Do you own a mobile phone?
  - 2. What kind of phone is it?
  - 3. Why did you choose to buy this phone?
  - 4. Who pays the mobile phone bills? What is the monthly bill?
  - 5. Which mobile phone apps do you use the most?
  - 6. In your opinion, what are some of the most popular apps today?
  - 7. Does your phone have a passcode? Have you shared this passcode with anyone?
  - 8. On a typical day, could you tell me how you use your phone? (from the time you wake up until you get to bed)
  - 9. Can you describe an instance where you intentionally refrained from using your phone?
  - 10. What would your reaction be if you lost your phone? If someone went through your phone? Why?
- ii. Computers



1. Do you or your family own a desktop computer or laptop?
2. Are there any rules regarding computer use in your family? What are they? Do you follow them?
3. Can you tell me about what you did the last couple of times you used the computer? Are these activities typical?
4. Do you use a computer anywhere other than your home?
5. How would not having a computer affect your life?
6. Do you or your family own an iPad or tablet? (if participants say they use other forms of communication technology, questions similar to those asked about computers will be explored)

iii. Social media (Facebook and Twitter)

1. Do you have an active Facebook account?
2. How would you describe your Facebook posts? What were your last 5 posts?
3. How did you choose to personalize your profile? (profile picture, cover photo, “about” section)
4. Are you concerned with issues of privacy? How do you manage these issues?
5. How often do you access Facebook in a day?
6. Which Facebook groups do you belong to? Why?
7. Can you narrate an incident where Facebook exchange came up in an offline conversation?
8. Have you even gotten into an Facebook argument? Can you describe the exchange.
9. Do you ever post about or comment on others’ posts about religious, gender, national issues?
10. Have you ever deactivated your Facebook account? Why?
11. Do you use any other forms of social media? Which ones? (if participants say they use other forms of social media, questions similar to those asked about Facebook will be explored)

**C. Participants as producers**

1. Are you involved in producing media? (plays, choirs, bands, movies, blogs, YouTube videos etc.)
2. Describe the kind of media you produce?
3. Why did you start producing media?
4. Why do you continue to produce media?
5. Are there any challenges associated with media production?
6. Does your gender, culture, religion, age influence the media you produce?

**Part 3. Closing questions**

1. Are there any questions I should have asked?

2. Is there anything you would like to add?
3. Do you know of anyone else who would be interested in participating?

## APPENDIX 3

### FIGURES

**Figure 1: “Save our land” meeting**

(Pereira, 2013)



**Figure 2: “Save our land” protest**

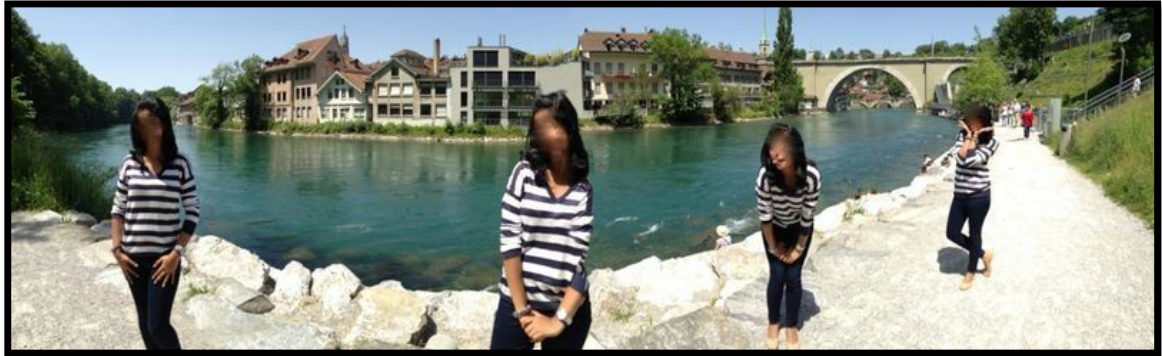
(Pereira, 2013)





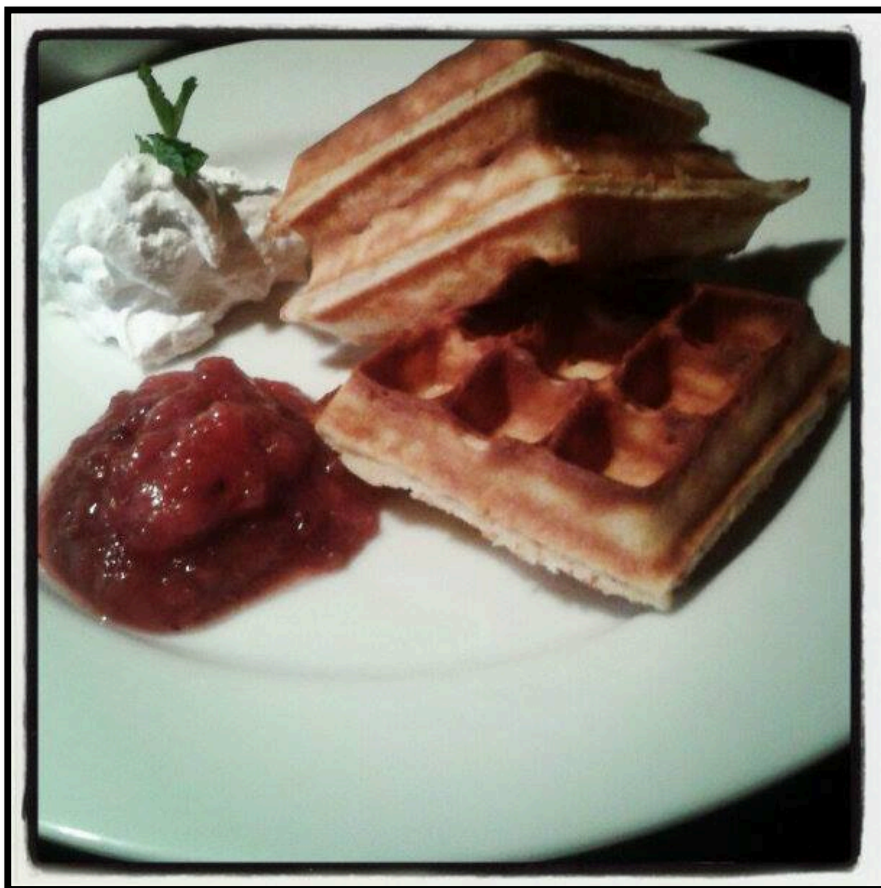
**Figure 3: Modernity and mobility: “a lil of me everywhere”**

Veronica’s photo. (Personal communication, modified to maintain privacy)



**Figure 4: Modernity and consumption: waffles**

Tania’s photo. (Personal communication)



(“Ad spotting,” n.d.)

[illegible]

**Figure 6: Samsung Diva: print advertisement**

(“Samsung Diva S7070,” n.d.)



**Figure 7: iBall Andi Udaan: print advertisement**

(Diwan, 2014)





**Figure 8: “What man Santa?” screenshot 1**

(StudioSkull, 2012)



**Figure 9: “What man Santa?” screenshot 2**

(StudioSkull, 2012)

